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[image]

## **More Than Passion and Lust**

It was a match made in business heaven, but neither Lisa nor Jennie imagined that a union like theirs, ridden with hate and mistrust if given the chance, could lead to unexpected pleasures . . . or maybe even more.

**IF YOU ARE NOT COMFORTABLE WITH LISA HAVING THAT 'MALE ORGAN' THEN THIS STORY IS NOT FOR YOU!  
REMINDER THAT THIS IS ONLY A FAN FICTION AND NOT MEANT TO HUMILIATE OR DEGRADE ANY OF THE CHARACTERS. THIS ALSO HAS MATURE CONTENT SO IF YOU'RE 18 YRS. OLD AND BELOW KINDLY DO NOT READ.  
THANK YOU.**

# [1] Underhanded

With a muffled swish, the ivory wedding gown slid down her olive skin pooling around bare feet, leaving her naked save for the white lace undergarments. She stepped out of the gown and made quick work of removing the offending pins that held the perfectly coiffed hair, dropping everything on the carpeted floor as she pulled them out.

She gave her hair one last shake and the long brunette mass tumbled artlessly over her shoulders and back like bunched satin. Bending down, she picked up the gown and with enough force, threw it across the room where it landed on one end of the heart-shaped bed.

Twenty-five-year-old Jennie Kim stared at the garment with cold eyes. The whiteness and the intricate bead-work of the gown, a startling contrast to the deep hue of the red bedspread and the dim lights of the honeymoon suite, making it appear too bright . . . too perfect . . . too offending in Jennie's eyes.

A slight frown creased her forehead, disgust suddenly evident. The gown that was currently a huge clump on the bed, in all its simple elegance, seems to be taunting her. That such a wonderful creation from designer Monique Lhuillier is worn by a happy bride.

Happy, though, is something Jennie was definitely not.

*Not in this moment!*

If circumstances were different, she would have felt the appropriate joy of being a bride. Hell, she might have even blushed with happiness while flaunting the expensive gown . . . but unfortunately for her, it wasn't the case.

Abruptly, a wave of anger and sadness assailed her and she felt the back of her eyes burn. She tightly shut them forcing the tears to dry

before they even fall. She repudiated to feel weak and pitiful. She had to be strong for her own sake. She refused to shed a tear over this predicament that her wicked witch of a stepmother cunningly thrust upon her.

She will not cry.

Taking control of her emotions, Jennie opened her eyes and stepped closer to the bed casting the gown off with an angry push of the hand. And as if that wasn't enough distance from her, she kicked it like a soccer ball. It went flying off the floor then landed right at the door leading to the dressing area.

Childish behavior, of course. But she knew taking out her irritation and anger on the gown was a better way to dispense all the negativity in her emotions than murdering her stepmother or her husband, however satisfying both may be, and end up in jail for it.

No, she will not give them the satisfaction of seeing her breakdown again.

Precisely, twelve months ago, a week after her father's death, the lawyer in charge of the late Kim Ji Yong will read the testament. She wasn't interested in her share of the highly successful Kim business of hotels and resorts or which assets from the countless lands, estates, ranches, and rental properties, among others, were left as an inheritance. She knew what was rightfully hers even when her father was still alive because she is the only child of Kim Ji Yong. And money was never really an issue for her since she had already taken control of the trust fund when she turned twenty, plus the fact that she earns enough from her own profession as a photographer to continue living the luxurious life she was born into.

Mourning her father's death, at that time, made her care less that her stepmother, Lee Chaerin, had gotten enough share in the company to control the board. But just when she thought the painful process was over, the lawyer uneasily cleared his throat and read what must have been the last part of the will:

*With condition that said properties, shares and estates be transferred to my daughter Jennie Kim, only when she enters into marriage with a man or a woman from a reputable family, with approval from my wife Chaerin Lee-Kim, by her 23rd birthday. In addition, that my daughter Jennie Kim stay married for a period of at least 5 years. If the said condition is not met by the specified time allotted, all the aforementioned will be inherited by my wife, Chaerin Lee-Kim."*

It was the moment that sent her world spiraling out of control. Not only did she lose a father, but she was also being robbed of her rights and freedom by the one person she had never learned to accept. Her stepmother.

She remembered gasping for air, collapsing on the floor and seeing the devious grin on Chaerin's face before everything went black.

The next day she wanted to forget the anger and betrayal she felt toward her father. Her mind could not find an explanation for that wretched paragraph in the will. She began to question the closeness she shared with her father. Was all of it fake? Because he had no other choice? Or was he merely obligated to love her? The pedestal that she had built for her father came crashing down. She began to hate a lot of people but most of all she hated herself for trusting the one man who should have protected her.

She fell into depression and was slowly but surely on the road to self-destruction by drinking every night. She lived like a vampire, asleep during the day from the hangover, awake by night ready to down as much alcohol until she passes out or ends up vomiting disgustingly at some dirty alley.

She wanted to numb herself from any emotion. She wanted to escape her predetermined future even for just a night, preferring to worry of her throbbing head than the rich, spoiled, arrogant and womanizing woman her stepmother chose for her to marry. Yes, her good-for-nothing evil stepmother chose a

WOMAN

for her to marry.

She would have gotten used to the drunken state but then there was Irene Bae, her best friend since preschool, the one person that stuck around no matter how many times she pushed her away.

Maybe it was Irene's endless sparkle in clothes that sparked a light in Jennie's befuddled head when she comes dragging her home most nights or it was the soothing effect of the color purple Irene loves a little too much or simply sheer determination to help a friend that pulled Jennie out of the hell hole she was deeply falling into. Whatever it was, only Irene Bae can say that she made Jennie sober again.

**"Look at yourself and tell me if that person you see is still Jennie Kim!"**

*Irene forcefully held her limp body toward the full-length mirror, the sound of her angry voice making Jennie's headache even more.*

**"Yes."**

*She croaked only to appease her, wishing Irene would let her get back to sleeping. The rays of the morning sun only made her feel worse than she already is.*

**"No."**

*Irene averred coldly, still with a firm grip on her arms to keep her standing. "Jennie Kim does not reek in her own vomit night after night and she's not one to willingly throw her life away because of some woman."*

*Jennie swallowed the dryness in her throat. She wanted to argue with her, tell her exactly how her dreams became useless or that she finds happiness nowadays at the bottom of a bottle. But her wasted self-gave her no energy to fight back. "I'm hopeless, Irene. Stay away." Was all she could utter.*

**"So this is how it's gonna be? You're letting her win just like that. Honestly, Jen, I'm disappointed."**

**"What the fuck are you talking about?!"**

*Releasing the hold on her upper arms, Irene backed away and rolled her eyes in exasperation but deep down she was extremely concerned for Jennie's wellbeing. "You're oh so wonderful stepmother, who else?" She explained trying another tactic to get into her head. "You, giving up on everything important in your life is exactly what she wants to happen. I bet she already knows that you've turned into this ghastly person and it's only a matter of time before she makes a move to take over your life under the guise of being a concerned family member helping you to recover when what she's really itching to do is throw you in rehab where you will rot away for good and never bother her again. And while you're in rehab supposedly receiving treatment but getting crazier by the minute, she is having a blast running your father's business and spending away your inheritance on every luxury imaginable to man."*

**"She will never do that."**

*She rasped, anger slowly seeping into her brain, knowing that even though Irene had only made up such a situation based on some movie, the possibility of it happening was too real to ignore.*

**"She will Jen. But only if you let her."**

**"I won't let her."**

*Jennie said with determination laced in her voice, color suddenly returning to her lips and cheeks and her dull eyes now grew alert.*

**"I believe you. But first, you need to stop this . . . this drunken obsession. It's been a month already."**

*Irene said gesturing a hand towards a haggard-looking Jennie who was struggling to stay on her feet. "Get yourself together, Jen. No matter how much life sucks, you have to get past that. And let's just hope, for your sake, the alcohol in your system didn't shrink your brain the size of a pea."*

*When Irene left minutes later after seeing her off to bed, Jennie felt a wash of cold air knock sense into her. For the first time since the reading of the will, she allowed herself to feel and think again. And because of that, she cried all morning. She cried until her fragile body racked in sobs. She cried until her tear ducts ran dry.*

*Meeting up with Irene the next day, her best friend carefully let her eyes wander over the pale-yellow sundress she opted to wear as Jennie slid into the seat opposite hers. "Are you Jennie Kim again?"*

**"Apparently, yes."**

**"About damn time gurl."**

*A week after that, just when she was getting her life back in order, Jennie realized, based on several sources close to her father, that Chaerin had somehow poisoned her father's mind into thinking that her daughter was in need of a keeper thus the arranged marriage and Jennie was fairly certain that Chaerin was easily able to convince her then sick father to change his will to suit her liking.*

*Yet instead of shrinking away again to wallow in her problems, Jennie decided to accept the arranged marriage only because she didn't want Chaerin to get her hands on the inheritance but with a promise to herself that she will find a way to get back at the woman who ruined her life.*

So during the wedding earlier, all one hundred and fifty guests, distracted by the opulent decoration, the lavish food, endless entertainment and the overall splendor of the wedding, hardly suspected anything amiss.

They didn't see how the bride had a forced smile plastered to her face or that her usually twinkling brown orbs lacked its luster.

No one noticed that the newlywed couple hadn't spoken a word to each other during the entire reception or how they made it a point to avoid each other's eyes. And if by chance their eyes would meet, they ended up glaring coldly at each other.

Nobody found it unusual when the bridegroom sought the company of her friends for the most part of the festivities rather than stay with her new bride.

None paid heed to see that the bride with her over bright smile and hollow-sounding laugh flinched every time a camera flash went off somewhere.

Not a soul in the wedding party, save one, had any indication that a





**disposition."**

She slowly spun around spreading the ruche skirt of the plain ice blue gown to show her point.

**"You're lucky I bothered coming up here to see if you had been murdered by your hubby, who I must say minus the cold demeanor is quite good looking for a woman."**

**"Blame Cruella de Ville for the gown. She hates sparkly things."**

Jennie said referring to her stepmother.

**"And as for my hubby's looks, I think that's nature, not Chaerin's doing."**

**"Oh so you do admit she's beautifully handsome. Is she good in bed?"**

Irene prodded even as a red pillow came flying from the bed which she easily caught.

**"Seriously, Irene!"**

Jennie protested trying her best to look stern as she swallowed a giggle.

**"No honeymoon is happening now or in the future."**

**"I wouldn't be so sure of it, Jen. She is your husband and you will be living in the same roof. Of course, her good looks scream the words "taste me and be happy". And it's a known fact that she's a woman whore. Apparently, women drop like falling leaves at her wake. At least that's what I heard."**

Irene mentioned, her voiced laced with exaggerated concern and shaking her head for effect.

**"You never know what's in store for you while living with her."**

Another wave of laughter welled from Jennie but in the back of her mind, she knew Irene had a point. It wasn't her husband's looks she

was concerned about but rather the living arrangements in the Gangnam mansion that her husband's parents gave as a wedding present.

**"Since when did you get the hots for my husband? I thought you prefer dark brooding males or females."**

She averred.

**"I'm the one in the rut but crap Irene, your mind is more messed up than mine!"**

**"She's not my type, hun. I can assure you that. But earlier when you were swapping spit with her, you two looked gorgeous together."**

Irene raised her arms in defense when Jennie made a move to throw another pillow at her.

**"Hey, I'm not the only one with that opinion! I'm just saying."**

**"I hate you."**

**"I love you too, my dear best friend."**

**"My life sucks."**

**"Well, like I always say, when life gives you lemons,"**

Irene paused to recall the wise words she supposedly lived by. Her eyes lit up then added,

**". . . make lemonade!"**

Jennie struggled to control her mirth but Irene had already begun laughing, slumping down on the bed next to her. Once their laughter waned, Jennie asked,

**Posted this first chap out of whim coz why not right? Hope you like it though :)**

**Btw, this is also available in AFF :) The one posted there is**

more advanced in updates. I just decided to put the story here in wattpad if you don't have an AFF account ^^

## [2] Compromise - M!

*A huge smile erupted from Lisa Manoban as she spotted the trim, leggy brunette makes her way through the airport, her eyes scanning the crowded area for a familiar face.*

*She waited patiently for her girlfriend of four years, Niki Zefanya, to spot her, wanting to see how her face would light up like it always did whenever they are reunited after long months apart, off at different colleges finishing their degrees. Hers was community development while she took business management.*

*The distance was difficult for both that's why holidays, like this Christmas, have always been something to look forward to. Lisa was especially excited for her plans with Niki later on tonight. She hoped it would go well as it took several nights of deliberation with her best friend Kang Seulgi who was not too happy to be sent off to do errands or be asked for her opinion on which ring would look good on Niki's finger.*

*There was only a year to go in college and they would be moving in together as planned. Lisa wanted to make it formal. After all, to her knowledge, their future together looked pretty darn good.*

*Finally, Niki's eyes landed on her and she gave a small smile maneuvering her way through the throngs of people. Lisa was slightly disappointed by the simple acknowledgment, but she didn't dwell on it long as she met Niki halfway drawing her into a tight embrace.*

**"God, I missed you."**

*She whispered loving the feel of her body pressed against hers and smelling the floral scent of her hair. She was too overjoyed with her presence that she hardly noticed the slack embrace or the awkward way her body leaned on her.*

**"I-- I missed you too, Lisa."**

*She piped in when Lisa pulled back.*

*There was something different about her. Lisa noted but again she brushed the thought aside. Her hand reached out to caress her flushed cheek while her gaze dropped to her lips and leaned down for a kiss. But Niki turned her face sideways.*

**"Oh come on, babe!"**

*She groaned mildly, her hesitation for public displays of affection, which wasn't an issue the last time, surprising her. Still, she pulled her in a hug tilting her face up for a kiss. "Let them watch."*

"

**Uhh, Lisa . . ."**

*She struggled, pushing her off with a light shove.*

**"What's wrong?"**

*Her hazel eyes stared at her confused dark ones with an entreating look. "I can't, Lisa. I can't."*

**"Why?"**

*Lisa saw a flash of what looked like guilt in her eyes that gave her a sudden sense of foreboding.*

**"I'll tell you tonight. My mom invited you over for--"**

**"Quit the shit, Niki. Tell me now!"**

*The hard edge in her voice effectively cutting her off.*

*Niki took a deep breath as if gathering the courage to speak. She gave Lisa a scared look then fixated her gaze on the button of her plaid shirt, unconsciously wringing her hands in nervousness.*

*The action drew Lisa's attention from her face. Her eyes slowly traveled down to her hands, hoping she's mistaken with her assumption. That Niki was only pulling her leg to get a reaction she could laugh about*

*later but hope quickly died in her heart when she saw the glittering diamond ring on her finger . . . an engagement ring from probably another man.*

*Her eyes narrowed into slits before a ridiculous sounding laughter erupted from her, attracting attention from some of the crowd.*

**"Lisa . . . I'm so sorry. I know I should have told you sooner but I just didn't know how and I didn't want to tell you over the--"**

*Lisa grabbed her wrist and yanked the hand that bore the ring up to her face. Niki gasped at the force of her hold, her entire body going rigid.*

**"Tell me, how does it feel to be a cheater?"**

*Lisa asked, her voice low and menacing. She shoved her hand off like it was contagious then added sarcastically, "Send my regards to your fiancé. Tell him to lay off on fucking you long enough to teach you what fidelity means because obviously I never got around to doing that."*

Lisa shook the memory aside running a hand through her long dark blond hair. She was annoyed with herself for thinking about Niki while she was getting married to Jennie Kim.

She had met Jennie once when they were formally introduced over dinner with their families but at that time had not bothered to take a good look at her. She wasn't interested in knowing her or being friendly with her. What she did remember was that she was wearing the most unflattering set of clothes that she likened to a sack and a cap that tucked her hair in and covered half her face.

It was quite obvious she made an effort to deglamorize herself during that meeting. She wasn't interested in knowing her either. And they never uttered a word to each other during the entire dinner.

She had only agreed to the marriage for the benefit of Manoban Corporation, the company that her grandfather, from her mother's side of the family, created. It was Lisa's inheritance. By marrying Jennie, Manoban Corporation will gain additional funds and resources to diversify its industry specifically into wine and tea

production. Something Lisa took interest in managing along with the chain of restaurants and bars all over the country she was already in charge of.

Though callous reason it may be for marrying someone but at this point, she didn't particularly care. After Niki, she welcomed the attention of women, which she used to ignore before, throwing their selves at her feet. And there were many who wanted her. She was never with the same woman twice. Anything to forget Niki was always welcome.

That was also one of the reasons why her grandfather and her parents put her up to the arranged marriage. Her poor mother, worried out of her wits of the countless women she dates, had given up hope on seeing her with a decent female but alas found a solution in Jennie Kim.

She was the perfect choice . . . in a practical business sense, of course. Even Lisa knew that.

During the wedding, these reasons were running through her head like a mantra to keep her in her place by the altar. But when Jennie finally came out, Lisa froze instantly. The Jennie she knew in her mind was not even a shadow of the person who was walking gracefully along the aisle.

Decked in a white strapless gown designed with glittering beads and flower appliqué, Jennie looked every bit the beautiful and elegant bride; charming curls fell from the loose bun of her hair framing a face that Lisa swore, in her state of shock, had a staggering similarity to Niki.

Her mind went blank staring at her stupidly for what seems like hours. It was only when Jennie raised her brown eyes, which were coldly suspicious, did she snap out of it and immediately averted her gaze.

Everything was a blur following that. She was only there as a participant, to play a part. The wedding was an expensive masquerade to conduct business between two families. So after the pleasantries that were expected of her, she wandered off and found



herself where she is now, a nice secluded bench on the other side of their rented villa.

**"Lis, I know you wanted a moment alone but don't disappear like that without telling anyone."**

The familiar voice of Seulgi interrupted Lisa's peace, making her jump slightly in surprise.

**"That's the whole point of my disappearing, Seulgi."**

**"I looked for you all over the villa which wasn't easy by the way considering the size of this place."**

Seulgi sat beside her, her intention to stay by Lisa made clear.

**"They really went all out for this wedding. I mean, we're in a fucking villa on top of a hill in Italy!"**

Lisa laughed brusquely, removing her designer coat tossing it on a rock next to her then folding the arms of her long-sleeved shirt up to her elbow.

**"Yeah. I'm absolutely thrilled."**

**"So is your new wife! She has the same . . . err . . . unenthusiastic look like you."**

**"Is she still there?"**

**"Nah. She left thirty minutes after you went. Probably in your room. I saw that small friend of hers -- the one with the old name -- going in just before I came looking for you,"**

Seulgi said then after a split second of hesitation prodded on,

**"You should talk to her, man. I'm guessing she's just as confused as you are."**

Lisa looked at Seulgi with an expressionless face.

**"What do I say to her? I don't even know why she agreed to**



leading to the honeymoon suite.

She decided to make an effort to communicate with Jennie. It was inevitable anyway considering their situation. There were details concerning their day to day living that needed to be addressed. She wasn't one to compromise on things that she was already used to but that was a price she expected to pay for agreeing to the marriage.

Sighing, she quickened her steps a little.

*The sooner I get this over with the better.*

She reached out to open the door but found it already ajar. She took a step but halted as she heard voices coming from inside. She recognized one belonging to Jennie and the other a male voice.

**"You always kiss me before you go."**

Jennie's voice echoed through the door. It was mildly teasing.

There was a chuckle then a lengthy pause before the man's voice said,

**"I'm not happy with what you got yourself into Jen."**

**"I know and I'm sorry. I promise I'll make it up to you."**

**"I will hold you to that."**

**"You should go."**

**"Yes. But put something on, will you?"**

Outside, Lisa's initial shock was outweighed by total disgust. She could not believe that her wife would welcome a man into their room on the night of their wedding. She abruptly backed up the door and proceeded past her room to avoid the man that was now exiting the room.

The man, in a navy blue jacket and faded jeans who was probably just as tall as Lisa, left in a hurry while not bothering to look

sideways for anybody who could have seen him . . . like the dark-eyed bridegroom who watched as he disappeared from the hallway before entering the suite where an unsuspecting Jennie was about to grab a robe from the armrest of the chair next to the bed.

**"You hate this marriage but couldn't wait to get laid,"**

Lisa said with dripping sarcasm, scaring Jennie out of her wits. She whirled around to face her, a mix of surprise and confusion on her face.

**"You should have told me. I would've come up sooner . . . after all I am your husband now and I have every right to your body. And it wouldn't have been a quickie like what you and your stud just engaged in."**

**"Excuse me?!"**

A humorless laugh escaped the Thai woman's lips and her face remained hard.

**"I never took you for a bitch, Kim, but I guess these days you never know."**

Jennie was flabbergasted. She had obviously seen Mino coming from their room and had instantly assumed some hanky panky happened. All thoughts of explaining were shoved aside as her temper flared over the unfair accusations.

She strode over to her forgetting the silk robe she was about to put on. Her eyes bore into her

with ire.

Lisa held her gaze unblinkingly, fighting against the sudden distraction of her

body walking towards her and the long wavy hair that swayed with her every step. She did not expect her to be this alluring.

Jennie stopped about a pace away from her and said,

**"Ah yes! A womanizer like you is no doubt an expert in bitches. But in this case, Manoban, you are dead wrong."**

The saccharine sweetness in her tone took her by surprise and the proximity of her almost naked figure left Lisa unable to evade the hand that suddenly connected to her cheek with a loud whack.

Lisa's head jerked sideways from the force of her slap but she recovered quickly, her vision clouding dangerously. For the first time in the twenty-four years of her life, Lisa was slapped by a woman and she wasn't about to let her action pass without consequence.

She grabbed her by the waist all of a sudden, making her yelp then roughly pushed her against the nearest wall effectively trapping her arms between their bodies to keep her from shoving or hitting her.

**"What the hell are you doing?! Let me go!"**

She snapped angrily, unable to move.

Her arms tightened around her.

**"Don't you dare try that again or--"**

**"Or what? You'll tell your mommy about it."**

She scoffed still trying to break free of her hold.

She scowled at that but is also unwillingly impressed by her feistiness. Even Niki wasn't as brave to challenge her when she's in a foul mood.

But Niki knew her. Jennie didn't.

*Damn!*

She berated herself.

*Why does she keep thinking of Niki?!*

For a moment they stood there in silence as if in a staring contest,

neither one backing down. Lisa let her eyes rove over her features, noting the smooth skin, perfectly arched brow, chocolate brown eyes framed by long russet lashes, an elegant nose, and luscious pink lips.

Seulgi was right. The hair, the nose and the curve of her cheekbones may have some liking to Niki but that's just about it. Niki had none of Jennie's allure or the playful innocence in her eyes. It dawned on Lisa that her wife is far more beautiful than Niki could ever be. And somehow that realization made her slowly forget all thoughts of Niki . . . at least for the moment.

Jennie noted her eyes had swiftly altered. It was no longer hard and scary but replaced by what could only be described as gentleness and . . . awe. She was bewildered by the sudden change and that made her to stop struggling.

She realized with a start that Irene was right. Lisa Manoban is indeed good looking and even more so up close. There wasn't anything remarkable about her features but in its entirety made for a face that was hard not to notice or admire. The dark blonde hair that fell over her brow had a charming appeal that most females will find irresistible and those intense hazel eyes that easily changes shade from light to dark depending on her mood could seduce any female over the age of ten.

Herself not excluded.

She lifted her head a fraction, eyes never leaving hers. Jennie was sure she was letting go. She prepared herself to push her off. Instead, one hand lifted to Jennie's cheek in a caress so gentle it seems almost in slow motion. She was enthralled by the Thai woman's touch. Her body, as if with a mind of its own, relaxed against hers and she forgot that she was mad at her just a minute ago.

Then Lisa, as if in a trance from staring into Jennie's eyes, bent her head and swooped down to her lips. It happened too quickly to even resist. Jennie gasped at the shock of her warm lips covering hers then felt the hand on her cheek slide down to her neck before drifting over her bareback while the other stayed around her waist

drawing her closer so that the contours of her body were fitted against her hardening built.

She was lost. Her heart beating wildly against her chest as her sensual mouth settled firmly over hers, gently tracing each curve, wanting to be acquainted with her lips. Lisa's tongue teased the seam after a moment and with a sigh, Jennie opened her mouth and let her slip her tongue inside.

The pressure of Lisa's mouth increased, exploring and tasting every sweet crevice as her hand moved up again to curve around Jennie's nape, her long fingers threading into her hair. She too was lost in the kiss.

Jennie's arms which were trapped between their bodies, in its own volition, slid up her shirt and wound around her neck.

The kiss grew intense in seconds.

Lisa groaned low in her throat at the incredible feeling of having to kiss Jennie and her kissing back just as ardently. When air became an issue her lips slowly descended, trailing kisses along her jaw then down to her neck, smiling against it when she moaned and held her tighter.

Encouraged by her reaction, her lips moved further south, kissing the smooth swell of her breasts that were barely covered by the strapless white bra while her wicked hands reached behind to open the hook. It fell off easily, exposing her pert breast to her.

Jennie felt her palm stroke over her rib cage as it slowly moved up to cup one breast, her fingers tightening gently over its fullness then it was quickly replaced by her warm mouth. Jennie almost cried out loud at the pleasure. She arched her body toward her as Lisa lifted her up slightly over her erection.

Jennie wanted more. She didn't want the Thai woman to stop.

Suddenly, a shrill sound cut through the silence of the room, snapping Jennie's senses back in focus. Her eyes went wide as saucers and her face flushed a deep shade of red. She abruptly

unwound her arms from her neck wrapping it over her exposed chest and downcasting her eyes to avoid hers.

The sound was Lisa's phone ringing inside her pants pocket. She cursed under her breath and reluctantly let go, gazing down at her with her brows drawn into a frown, her breathing heavy and her eyes glazed with lust.

She took a deep harsh breath, lips stretching into a thin line as she tried to regain composure. After a minute or so, she dug into her pocket for her phone and spoke a curt hello to whoever called her, turning away from Jennie to talk to her caller.

Jennie took that moment to bolt from her spot and grab the robe she should have put on earlier, wrapping it around her body like her life depended on it. She moved as far away from Lisa as possible going around the other side of the bed near the balcony doors. Her brain was in a jumble but she was silently berating herself for letting the Thai woman kiss her and more so for kissing her back.

**"Jennie . . ."**

Lisa called softly, having finished with the call.

She jumped slightly and gave off a self-conscious laugh.

**"I -- I . . . Did we just do that?"**

Her voice came out like a squeak making her blush even more.

Lisa shot her a serious glance, traces lust gone from her eyes.

**"Yes . . ."**

And without offering any explanation as to why she did what she just did, added to say,

**"...but it won't happen again."**

She nodded not knowing what else to say. She was mad at her just moments ago, wasn't she? She remembered professing hatred toward the Thai woman before she came in. Yet, she could still feel



her hot lips on her skin. Her own lips felt swollen, tingling from her pleasurable assault and her chest was still heaving for air. God, she was losing her mind!

**"I'm not staying here tonight,"**

Lisa stated with finality shoving her hands into her trousers pocket and headed for the door. Before leaving, she turned back slowly as if hesitating and after a weary sigh said,

**"Look, Jennie, you and I both know this marriage is nothing more than a business arrangement. We both don't want this. I don't expect you to act wifely for me and I really don't care if you fool around with other guys or girls. Just . . . be discreet about it and have some respect for our conjugal space."**

She could not believe her ears. Her mouth fell open as if to speak but finding no words come out closed back up. She could not believe her audacity to suggest she take up an affair albeit discreetly and lecture her at the same time about respect. Is this the same woman who kissed her with amazing passion?

**"Are you really this unscrupulous? Or just simply messed up in the head?"**

Jennie whispered aghast, all thoughts of their earlier lip lock shoved aside. Lisa remained impassive. She just stood by the door waiting for her to continue.

Shaking the incredulity from her head, she decided to act as blasé as she was.

**"These righteous conditions you set for my guidance, I assume, goes both ways."**

**"Naturally . . . in the spirit of fairness, these rules will apply to me too."**

**"Oh, you flatter me too much with these words, Lisa."**

She sighed, hands flying over her chest in dramatic mockery intending to insult her if only to break her nonchalance over their

predicament.

**"Really . . . you are too considerate of my feelings! However, did I get so lucky to marry a woman with such high principles? I feel so unworthy."**

But she was made of stone.

**"We're in agreement then,"**

Lisa retorted coolly before leaving.

**"Oh my god! My life is officially screwed."**

**I'll probably be updating this if I have free time same as to the other jenlisa FF so please anticipate till the end! :)**

## [3] Decisions

*6 months later...*

Sunday is

*"Pamper Irene"*

time.

Typically, she would be in bed taking her time to wake up. Sundays means tinkering around her apartment, go jogging, preparing a proper breakfast and in the afternoon treat herself to a wonderful spa.

Sunday is a day for rest and relaxation. A day where she needn't worry about deadlines or schedules. A day to de-stress and think about herself alone.

And why not think of herself at least one day of the week?

Working as a senior press relations officer for Chanel in Gangnam requires multi-tasking, a skill Irene happens to be extremely good with. But her job also means almost her entire week is spent in meetings with editors, stylists, creative designers and other influential people in the fashion industry; attending trunk shows and helping facilitate shoots for different publications, to name a few.

She isn't complaining or lamenting over the hectic days because she loves her job and wouldn't trade it for anything. In fact, she takes pride in what she does and she is offended by people who say that she doesn't need to be working for the simple reason that she's a Bae.

And 'Bae' for the last name meant rich, crème de la crème of high society, getting everything and anything or whatever else the name

denotes. The world can be tough even to people born into luxury because they give restrictions to what a rich kid should do with their lives. It's as if you cannot be good at anything when you're rich or they immediately assume you didn't work hard for a position like everybody else.

But Irene does her best to balance the socialite and the working girl in her if only to keep most of her acquaintances happy -- in case she needs a favor or two from them in the future.

Come to think of it, she's also quite diplomatic when need be. And for those reasons alone, she not only deserves applause but also a break from a grueling week of work.

Sunday is always that day but at nine o'clock that morning when the incessant ringing of the telephone blared throughout her apartment rousing her from sleep and making her fall off the bed in her haste to answer the call, Irene knew this particular Sunday will not be hers to enjoy.

"This had better be good." Irene groaned into the phone not bothering to ask who the caller was. She slowly lifted her weight off the floor, cradling the phone between her neck and ears and climbed back onto the purple queen-sized bed sighing as the feather trimmings of the bedspread tickled her skin. She was gradually slipping to blissful sleep again.

**"I need a man, Irene. And I need it pronto."**

Irene bolted upright pulling the eye mask from her face as she adjusted the phone to her ear.

**"Jennie? Is that you?"**

**"Yes, it's me and this is qualified as a life and death situation for you."**

**"For me? What's that got to do with you needing a man?"**

**"The model didn't show up! If you want to make the deadline for Elle magazine then you get your butt off the bed and come here at the studio."**

"I am gonna kill that --"

"Irene --"

**"I'm up!"**

She screeched in agitation sliding off the bed and heading for the bathroom.

**"I'll be there in thirty."**

[illegible]

As promised, thirty minutes later, a not so happy Irene walked through the door of the building structure she often referred to as a warehouse.

She was greeted by a few people she knew were members of Jennie's staff as she made her way inside the studio, expertly maneuvering around a maze of things that were used as props -- racks of assorted clothing for men and women, rolls of backdrop paper in every imaginable scenery design, cardboard trees, animals and rocks, layers of bright fabrics hanging from pipes on the low ceiling, plastic food items, various kinds of tables and chairs, a collection of pillows, umbrella reflectors, several cameras on tripods and a variety of photographic equipment that she had no idea what was used for.

The place is spacious and cluttered as you would expect any photo studio but Irene, having spent enough time with Jennie, knew the set like the back of her hand. She knows the first door is used as a pantry that her best friend stacks with enough food to feed an army. The second door is Jennie's office that adjoined to an adequately sized bedroom and bath that she uses when she cannot be bothered to drive home after a late photoshoot. And the third door led to a windowless room where a complicated machine develops the photographs.

She found a barefooted Jennie, in a black tank top and tight jeans, clicking away with a camera while a female model in an asymmetrical red party dress posed in front of a green backdrop

paper as per Jennie instructions.

**"Look seductive,"**

she ordered at the model, shoulders hunched while she assessed the pose snapping with the camera as she moved.

**"Great!"**

**"Belligerent."**

The model straightened and looked at Jennie in puzzlement.

**"What?"**

Jennie lowered the camera, her lips opening slightly.

**"Aggressive,"**

she clarified patiently.

**"Spoiling for a fight . . . get it?"**

The pretty blonde model nodded. Then her eyes scowled. Her lips puckered, stretching the carefully made-up skin over high cheekbones.

**"That's perfect, Nancy!"**

complimented Jennie taking a series of shots.

**"Let's get you changed to the next clothing."**

When Nancy walked off the set, Jennie turned away as well and was not surprised to find a sullen-looking Irene slumped on an oversized couch.

**"Well?"**

She began, raising a challenging brow.

**"I called the agency already and they said Junho had a family emergency of some sort,"**

Irene explained in a tone that showed her annoyance over such a lame excuse.

**"Can they not send a replacement?"**

**"They're working on it but not promising anything. Their models are booked tight and those who aren't cannot be bothered because it's a Sunday. And it's not easy finding a replacement given your specific description."**

Jennie's brows scrunched in thought. Tomorrow, photos for the modeled Chanel clothes should be submitted or else there will be hell to pay. She would do away with the male model if she could but as it is, there were suits to be worn.

The creative designers at Chanel specifically requested Jennie to do the photoshoot and Irene was to oversee it meaning she's the person to call when problems like this are encountered.

**"I can't think of anything right now,"**

she admitted, striding over to where Irene was seated and plopped down next to hers.

**"Except, like I said earlier, we need a man."**

**"Hey, who doesn't?"**

came the glib retort.

**"And quite frankly, you need one more than I do. I'm not talking about a model by the way."**

Jennie lightly slapped her arm.

**"In case you've forgotten, I'm married. I have a husband...that is a woman. But still!"**

Irene laughed, one that had a sardonic sound to it leaning back against the couch, arms crossed over her chest.

**"Says who? That wedding band you chained around your neck?"**

**Yeah right! What you have is a ghost. Not a man. Or rather a woman."**

She scoffed with an eye roll.

**"It's been what -- six months -- of living in one house yet both of you are like boarders in that mansion. You live on separate sides of that house. You don't even see each other at all! I can't believe you even suggested this kind of arrangement."**

**"It's for our best interests. No complications. And she was more than agreeable to it."**

**"What complications? It's complicated enough to begin with. Yes, of course, she'll agree. She's a hot-blooded female, Jennie! She lives for the freedom to dally with many women and I very much doubt if Manoban believes in the word abstinence,"**

Irene averred in agitation.

**"And do you really think you can keep this up for four years and six months more?"**

Jennie bit her lip uneasily. It was during their plane ride from Italy, the day after the wedding six months ago, that they were able to discuss the pressing matter of their living arrangement.

**"So it's clear then? The east side is yours and the west is mine. There are common areas in the house but if you're as busy as me, I doubt you will find time to even use the kitchen or the living room."**

*Lisa, looking up from the newspaper she was reading, explained.*

*Jennie remained gazing out the window. She was not in a conversing mood due to lack of sleep from the night before which was mostly caused by the woman seated next to her. "Yeah, whatever," she snorted. "We're both single. We act like it."*

*There was a rustling of the newspaper as she folded them while she eased sideways to face her. "Hey, I'm trying to iron out this mess we have! The least you can do is listen woman," she austere said reaching*



*a hand to touch her arm.*

*She recoiled at her touch like she was burned, hastily tugging her arm away from her grasp. The memory of last night's heated kiss flooding her mind causing her to tremble slightly.*

**"I listened!"**

*She insisted, annoyed with herself. "We live separately in one house. We go out as a couple only when absolutely necessary. We pretend to be a happily married pair to friends who think this marriage will actually work and to our family who wants to make sure we're sticking by the terms of this arranged marriage. We can go on dates with other people and have relationships with them so long as we're discreet. Is there anything else I didn't cover?"*

*Lisa was taken aback by her outburst, but she deftly concealed it with a blank face. "Yes, one more thing . . . don't flinch when I touch you," she said which sounded more like an order to Jennie.*

*Jennie's eyes sent daggers towards the Thai woman's way and she poked her chest with a well-polished nail. "Who the hell do you think you are?! I may be married to you, but you do not own me. I will not be ordered around like some brainless tra--"*

**"Shut up,"**

*she muttered.*

**"No! You shut up and listen!"**

*She butted in crossly. "Understand this -- I am not one of your girls so do not treat me like one. I do not fancy you and I will not worship the ground you walk on. I agree to all these terms regarding our marriage but outside of it whatever I do is none of your fucking business and that includes flinching at your touch when I feel like it."*

**"God! You talk too much,"**

*Lisa alleged with a fleeting look over her shoulder then in one fluid motion her hands were on both sides of her face cradling it with surprising tenderness.*

*Caught off guard, it took a second for Jennie to recognize the gleam in her eyes before her lips came down on hers for a kiss.*

**"N-No . . ."**

*She dissented but Lisa silenced her by deepening the pressure of her lips to Jennie's.*

**"Shut up and kiss me back,"**

*the Thai woman whispered against her lips, but she did not ease her grasp on her face.*

*If Lisa had kissed her roughly, she would have fought her off. But the kiss was not as fierce as last night. It was soft and unhurried and sweet yet the effect on Jennie was just as arousing.*

*With a helpless sigh, she obliged and just as softly brushed her lips against her, light feathery kisses that made her forget yet again the annoyance and hatred she felt towards her.*

*But before the world melted away around them, they heard a deliberate cough.*

*Reluctantly, Lisa pulled away but her arm looped over Jennie's shoulder drawing her closer to her and she looked up to see an elderly man in a checkered shirt and matching khaki pants waiting by the aisle for her attention.*

*Mr. Song!" Lisa greeted the smiling man while Jennie stiffened next to her, recognizing the man as one of the wedding guests. "I didn't hear you approach." She shifted her weight a little to tell her, "Oh, babe, Mr. Song here is a friend of my grandfather."*

*She nearly choked at the endearment, but she forced a nod instead.*

**"I apologize for the intrusion, Lisa, Jennie."**

*Mr. Song amended with a chuckle. Jennie offered him a disconcerted smile. Obviously, the old man wasn't really sorry. He looked more thrilled by what he witnessed. "I was just -- well, you know what -- never mind. It's not that important anyway."*

**"Are you sure, Mr. Song? We don't mind,"**

*Lisa urged sounding like she was in a jovial mood while she made a deliberate show of affectionately rubbing Jennie's arm. It made Mr. Song smile from ear to ear.*

**"I'm sure, Lisa. I'm going. Continue where you left off."**

*Jennie yanked Lisa's arm off once Mr. Song left their side. "What was that?! Are you bipolar or something? Half the time I don't know how your mood swings pan out."*

**"That, Kim,"**

*she drawled cockily sitting up straight and pulling the newspaper tucked in front of her. "is how to pretend when we're around friends or family."*

**"Next time you pretend, don't consider kissing part of it!"**

**"Why not? Kissing is the easiest and most convincing way to pretend you care for someone. And besides, you seem to like it."**

*Jennie huffed. If it wouldn't draw attention from the plane, she would have stomped her foot in frustration at Lisa's nonchalance. "And you're the one who declared last night that it won't happen again."*

*Unexpectedly, she smirked at that and she looked at Jennie with smiling eyes. "I did, didn't I?" She said. "Let me rephrase it then. Kissing won't happen again except when we have to make others believe that we're a loving married couple."*

**"Your cunning wit astounds me,"**

*she said sarcastically.*

*She continued to smile, bending her head to her ear then whispering, "If it helps any, I must say I like kissing you too."*

*Jennie leaned away from her, the warmth of her breath against her ear was disrupting her thinking. "Don't even try to flatter me. Every woman like you likes to kiss girls. Doesn't matter who it is so long as it's a girl."*

*And you're no exception."*

**"True. But in your case, Kim, I can't seem to control myself and that never happened to me before."**

When they reached Gangnam, after Lisa made some fake promise to her parents that they will plan a proper honeymoon soon, they stuck with the arrangement agreed upon. The last part of their conversation on the plane forgotten.

And that was the last she saw of her.

It was strange at first, living in a different house knowing that on another end was her husband but once she got adjusted, she went on with her life like usual. But when most of the people she works with began constantly asking when they will get to meet her -- the elusive husband -- an uneasy feeling, she kept trying to ignore, surfaced.

She never voiced this to Irene but now that the subject is open . . . can she do it? Can she keep living with a stranger? Can she waste away five years for a woman she doesn't care about only to keep Lee Chaerin's hands from her inheritance?

**"Your silence answers my question loud and clear, Jennie."**

**"I don't know if all this is worth it, Irene. If I stay married, Chaerin won't get my inheritance but by then I would have spent five years in a marriage that kept me from finding Mr. Right. Cheesy as it sounds, but I want to get married to a man I love and who loves me back,"**

Jennie avowed suddenly feeling depressed as the reality of her situation came crashing down.

**"If I decide to end this now, Chaerin gets everything that my father and mother had worked hard for and I don't know if I can take knowing that."**

Irene's face dropped sadly as she reached out to hug Jennie.

**"I'm so sorry, Jen. I can't decide for you on these but just know**

**that whether you need me or not, I'm always here."**

**"I'm here for you too, Rene. Whenever, wherever."**

They exchanged smiles that belied the strong bond they developed over the course of their friendship. Both silently acknowledging their luck to find a friend in one another.

**"Well,"**

Irene breathed breaking the poignant moment after a while.

**"This is fun and all, Jen, but we strayed too far on the problem at hand -- we still need this man or any replacement there is!"**

Giggling, Jennie nodded.

**"I never thought we'd need a man this bad."**

She looked up to see Nancy had already changed into a little black dress and was walking back into the set.

**"I trust your powers of finding solutions."**

With that, she left Irene and attended to her model.

A good hour and a half later, a grinning Irene joined Jennie in the pantry and helped herself with a bottle of Evian from the fridge.

**"We have a lunch date,"**

she informed then took a swig of water.

Jennie lifted a brow.

**"With who?"**

**"Don't know."**

Irene shrugged sketchily.

**"It's a blind date Im Nayeon set up for me a few weeks back."**

**You know Nayeon back in high school, the student council president, class valedictorian. I've been putting it off but now seem like a perfectly good time."**

**"Uhuh. Why now? Aren't you forgetting the replacement model we need for the shoot?"**

**"Oh that . . . I asked for a few hours' extension from Elle. They said yes."**

**"Okay . . . so why do you need me for this date?"**

**"It's a double date. I told Nayeon I'm bringing you along so she, in turn, told the person to bring a friend too."**

Irene held up a hand to stop any more questions from Jennie.

**"And before you say another word, we can use this opportunity to find the replacement we need for the shoot because according to Nayeon this person is supposedly a hunk."**

**"I can't go on a date!"**

Jennie objected shaking her head vigorously at the idea.

**"Not in those clothes, you can't,"**

Irene remarked with a quick once over of Jennie's clothing.

**"That's not what I mean and you know it,"**

she insisted in exasperation.

Leaning both hands on the table, Irene said,

**"Unless you can tell me with a 100 percent certainty that your husband has not seen, dated or screwed another female over the past six months then I won't force you to come on this date."**

Jennie buried her head between her hands and closed her eyes in lethargy. She had no argument over that. They were both also well

aware of Lisa Manoban's reputation regarding women. And even if she tried to argue that dating while she's married is against her principles, knowing Irene, it will be a futile effort.

**"I bet you, Manoban is not wasting time while she's married to you. So you shouldn't either. Dating is one way to meet Mr. Right."**

**"Or Mr. Wrong."**

**"The point is if you do not do something about your love life right now, it will stay that way for the next four years and half that you're with Manoban. And if I recall correctly, the last relationship you were in was with that Hanbin guy. That's like junior in college."**

**"Oh right, this is coming from you, the girl with a love life,"**

Jennie derided.

**"I may not have one, but I'm working on it. It takes patience to find The Man,"**

Irene quipped back unperturbed.

**"My standards are high so there has to be many to choose from."**

Jennie ran her hands through her messy curls and sighed jadedly.

**"Fine, you win."**

**"Perfect! This is gonna be a fun Sunday after all!"**

Irene cheered.

**"I can feel it."**

**Enjoy the update guys :) Please do comment, your thoughts are always welcome. :)**

## [4] Tangled - M!

*She was completely naked. The two-piece swimsuit lay forgotten at their feet.*

*She would never let her touch her this way. But the incredible feel of her slick skin straining against hers was all too real. Droplets of pool water making her skin look even more inviting than it already is. She was warm, sexy and willing in her arms. Her head was thrown back against the white walls in pleasure. Her hands clung to her broad shoulder for support and her breasts rubbed against her bare ones as she moved her delectable body in tune with her long fingers inside her wet core.*

**"Lisa . . . fast . . ."**

*She whimpered with urgency, looking straight at her with glassy eyes.*

*The sound of her name on her semi parted lips aroused her even more. She moved her fingers to heed her plea and covered her lips with her own muffling her moans in a searing kiss.*

*In mere moments, she came undone her body tensing her juices flowing in her hand. For Lisa, it was a sight to behold. She was gloriously consumed with desire and it was because of her.*

*It made her body throb until even her limbs began to tremble. She wanted nothing more than to bury herself inside her wet warmth, but she prolonged her need to wait for her to come down from the high.*

*She isn't like all the other women, she reminded herself, watching her body slowly relaxing. "Jennie . . ." She breathed, the raspy voice sounding foreign to her own ears. Her hands feverishly shifted down the back of her thighs carefully lifting her up to the right height.*

**"I need you now."**

**"I'm yours, Lisa."**



*She seductively whispered wrapping her legs around her.*

*That was all she needed to hear. She drove her entire length into her welcoming warmth and they both groaned at the exquisite feeling of being intimately joined. She wanted to go slow, lengthen the passion between them but the arousing shift of her body made her lose control.*

*She became rough and demanding and she took her without restraint. Her back was pushed up against the cold wall from the force of her thrust, but she didn't seem to care. She wanted her . . . all of her.*

*She was consumed with passion and she was fueling it even more with cries of pleasure. It didn't take long for her to come close to exploding and she could sense from the urgency of her moans that she was near orgasm. "Jennie . . ." She panted clenching her eyes shut.*

*But suddenly she stopped. Her legs loosening from her hips and when she found her footing, she pushed her away. "Lisa . . . I'm so sorry."*

*Her eyes still remained shut refusing to open at will. "No, no, don't be sorry. Don't stop." She stumbled back a little but reached out blindly to hold her again.*

*She doesn't seem to be listening. "I know I should have told you sooner, but I just didn't know how and I didn't want to tell you over the--"*

*The familiarity of the line made her force her eyes open and was shocked to find Jennie gone instead there was, "Niki?!"*

*She sat up from her bed in shock sweat dripping down her bare skin. Conscious of the discomfort between her thighs, she struggled to reorient herself. Her eyes scanned the room apprehensively and when she saw no one with her, she cursed aloud,*

**"Dammit!"**

*She was drunk last night. She had to be. Why else would her heated dreams of Jennie end with Niki there?*

*She had dreams of Jennie before but it always ended to her satisfaction. However, there was no rational explanation for what she just dreamed of. And if there is one, it wasn't crossing her mind*

right now.

Leaning back against the headboard, she raked her hands through her sweat damp hair trying to shake off the bizarre feeling of her fucked up dream. She closed her eyes again, relaxing her taut nerves by thinking about the tea farm Manoban Corporation recently acquired.

She had to study everything about

*Tea.*

She had a lot of work to do to familiarize herself with the farm and its operations. She intended to run the farm well . . . if not better than the previous owners.

Several minutes later, she forced herself to leave the bed and jumped in the bathroom for a shower. She stood under the spray willing herself to relax but thoughts of Jennie entered her mind again.

Yes, she was

*possibly*

drunk last night when Seulgi dropped her off. She had one too many drinks and it was because she chose to focus her attention on the various choices of alcoholic beverages than on the women at the club who were vying for more than just flirtatious conversation.

Normally, she would have jumped at any chance to fuck any willing female but about two months ago she was suddenly ridden with guilt over the thought of

*cheating*

on Jennie. And as much as she tried to douse it by thinking she was probably seeing other guys as well, the guilt refused to go away.

In the months following their marriage, she lived day by day thinking about herself, her work and her friends alone. It was how she used to live before. She was used to it. She rationalized that the

brunette most likely lived her own life without her in the picture.

It was their agreement anyway. So she saw no point in stressing over the fact yet the faint voice in her head persistently nagged her, reminding her that she's no longer single and available.

For a while, she was successfully able to push it aside. But then came the days when she would chance to see Jennie in the house. She was unaware of her since she always kept her distance sticking with the agreement of living separately.

She saw her in the kitchen once, sitting atop a counter, a pint of Baskin Robbins's in one hand, eyes closed while licking a spoon clean of ice cream. Her pink tongue darting in and out of her mouth. It was the most seductive sight Lisa ever saw and it took a lot of control to restrain herself from ravaging her right then and there.

Weeks after that, she saw her again. This time she was asleep on the couch, her hair sprawled out on the cushion in charming disarray. She wore a teal-colored tank that was slightly raised at the hem affording a glimpse of the flat stomach that Lisa longed to touch with her hands and lips. She looked so peaceful yet so tempting at the same time.

Both times, she dreamed of her.

They were wild wet dreams. Usually ending with her sated and Jennie snuggled up next to her. And both instances, she would find release the next day in a nameless female that offered herself to her.

Last night she saw her swimming in the indoor pool. She was wearing a gold bikini that seems to blend with her skin tone. She was a seductive vision. It made her remember their honeymoon night and the kiss they shared. She didn't know where she found the discipline to stay away considering her supposed drunken state. But she did and that was why she dreamed of her again. Only this time it ended differently.

Sighing, she stepped out of the shower feeling clean and refreshed and her body somewhat calm. She didn't want to think anymore.

She went back to bed after putting on comfortable clothes hoping to be lulled back to sleep but just as she was about to close her eyes the door flew open and a grinning Seulgi materialized in her peripheral vision.

**"There's this thing called knocking you know,"**

Lisa grumbled shifting on her side to turn away from Seulgi.

**"Get up,"**

she said.

**"We're going out."**

**"Fuck off."**

**"No, can't do that.,"**

Seulgi said flatly.

**"I have a date and you're coming with me."**

Lisa sat up irritably knowing Seulgi would not stop to pester her.

**"As what? Your wingman? Thanks, but no."**

**"What happened to you? You look like shit."**

**"It's called being hungover, moron. I was drunk last night in case you forgot."**

Seulgi narrowed her gaze at Lisa with oddity.

**"No, you weren't . . . unless you kept drinking after I dropped you off."**

It was Lisa's turn to frown looking up to see mild confusion written over her friend's face that mirrored her own. And from Seulgi's tone of voice, she was sure she wasn't messing with her.

**"I wasn't? Then why do I feel like my head just came out of a war zone?"**

Standing a few steps away from the bed, Seulgi crossed both arms as she seems to ponder what was said. Lisa noted her brows curling together in an almost comical way and her lips pursed into a thoughtful line.

Then in the next second her eyes lit up like a brilliant idea just came to her and her lips curved into a mischievous smile.

**"What?!"**

Lisa asked.

**"This is what happens when a player like you suddenly decides to be celibate!"**

She guffawed with much gusto stepping sideways to lean a hand against a table for support. Apparently finding Lisa's dilemma a good source of mirth.

**"I didn't think you could go on without sex for a week much more so for two months but hell you did! I applaud the determination, but I can see now how this no sex policy is screwing with your brain!"**

Seulgi's laughing analysis of her problem hit her in full realization. She hated to admit it but there was truth in it. All these crazy dreams are because of unrelieved sexual tension.

It started when she decided to steer away from fucking random females to appease her guilt. For lack of any argument, Lisa scoffed,

**"I'm hearing this from someone who's as much of a player if not more."**

**"So what? I'm not denying myself of a good fuck, unlike you. It's not healthy. And it pains me to see you like this."**

**"I'm touched by your concern, Kang."**

Lisa snorted finally standing up to grab a bottle of water from the small fridge in her room.



She practically shrieked causing most of the diners to stare at the three hugging girls.

**"Hey, Nabs!"**

Jennie greeted back squeezing the Bunny-looking girl in a tight hug.

**"How have you been?"**

**"I've never felt better. I just got engaged!"**

She replied in an absolute thrill, showing off the square-cut diamond engagement ring when they pulled back.

**"That's great to see hear, Nabs. Congratulations!"**

Irene voiced her congratulations as well then moved toward their table followed by Nayeon and Jennie.

**"You just got engaged yet found time to arrange this date. I'm impressed, Nayeon!"**

**"Oh you know me,"**

Nayeon said with a flippant shrug of her shoulders followed by a laugh.

**"Besides you said you needed this date to find a replacement for the shoot."**

**"Yes, we do or we're toast,"**

Irene confessed.

**"Where are they anyway? You would think they'd make a good impression by being punctual. Ugh! Men!"**

**"Oh, dear...you thought you guys are going to have a date with men?"**

**"Uh, yeah..."**

Irene confusedly said.

**"Didn't I mention it to you?"**

**"Oh my gosh! I'm sorry!"**

Nayeon looks at them guiltily.

**"I forgot that you specifically told me you need men as a replacement. I kinda set you up with the wrong gender."**

**"WHAT?"**

Jennie stared at her in disbelief.

**"I'm really sorry girls. But don't worry 'cause I assure you that your dates right now can pass as a replacement too even if they are not men."**

**"Fine. There's nothing we can do about it anyway. Let's just make the most out of what we currently have,"**

Irene grumbled before turning her attention to the frowning Jennie beside her.

**"You okay with it, Jen?"**

Jennie sighed before answering,

**"Fine."**

**"Thank goodness,"**

Nayeon sighed in relief.

**"I'm really really sorry Jen."**

**"Don't worry about it,"**

Jennie assured then smiled.

**"So where are they?"**

**"Oh they're here already. They actually co-own this place."**



Irene's brows rise at the piece of information.

**"Really?"**

**"Yeah. They just went to the office at the back. We still have two minutes to spare anyway,"**

Nayeon explained then turned her attention at Jennie who was quietly sitting next to Irene playing with the napkin on the table.

**"How about you Jen? What's up with you lately?"**

Jennie smiled sheepishly debating about what to tell her. Agreeing on this date wasn't really sitting well with her but they do need a replacement for the shoot. Sighing, she decided to come clean and slowly forced the words out of her mouth.

**"I -- kinda -- I'm married."**

Nayeon gasped at this. Her hands flew over her gaping mouth in shock.

**"Wh—what?! Did I hear her right?"**

She cast a questioning glance at Irene to verify her claim to which the ebony-haired girl nodded.

**"When did it happen? Why didn't you invite me? Where is your ring? Why did you come on this date then?!"**

**"It's . . . complicated, Nayeon."**

**"Yes,"**

Irene reinforced lamely.

**"I bet it is or you wouldn't be right here waiting for your date,"**

Nayeon averred with a disheartened shake of the head. But Jennie could tell she was still stunned by the news.

**"Who's the lucky bastard anyway?"**

**"That would be me, Nayeon."**

Three heads looked up at the source of the voice and they all gasped in unison seeing Lisa Manoban standing by their table wearing a not too happy expression on her beautifully handsome sculpted face.

**"Oh god!"**

Jennie mumbled on a ragged breath immediately looking away from Lisa's disagreeable stare directed at her.

**"Unbelievable,"**

Irene intoned, straight-faced.

**"You would be what?"**

Nayeon inquired on Lisa oblivious to the fact that the reason for her surprise in seeing Lisa was completely different from the reason of the other two girls seated across her.

Lisa threw a deadly gaze at Seulgi, who hovered beside her overcome by the same astonishment that Irene and Jennie were exhibiting, before she retorted,

**"The lucky bastard she married."**

Nayeon blinked once trying to absorb what Lisa said then her hand slapped over her forehead in utter speechlessness, her mouth hung open the entire time that a balled-up sock could easily fit in it.

She swung her gaze back and forth at Lisa and Jennie then over at Irene and Seulgi.

**"You two know each other too?"**

**"Maid of Honor,"**

Irene replied.

**"Best man,"**

Seulgi rejoined.

**"You know, Nabs..."**

Irene interjected coolly, drawing Nayeon's gaze back to her and cutting through the awkwardness of their quandary.

**"...this is one of those blind dates where I'd rather be blind."**

**"I didn't know!"**

Nayeon clamored defensively flinging both arms in the air.

**"How was I supposed to know that you're bringing a married Jennie on this date and Seulgi here decided to bring Lisa who turned out to be the same woman married to her! What the hell were you two thinking to come on this date when you're already married?! And what kind of a best man and maid of honor are you to let them go on this date?!"**

All of her questions remained unanswered.

With her face contorted in incredulity and a good amount of confusion over some hazy details regarding Lisa and Jennie, Nayeon scrambled off the booth slinging her bag over her shoulder, glanced at her watch and announced,

**"I'm going."**

She gave them all a final intent look then added,

**"You settle this -- pickle -- you got yourselves into and don't even think about blaming me because all four of you are at fault here! God--you people are insane!"**

Without waiting for Nayeon to disappear out of the restaurant, Lisa slid inside the booth right across Jennie and tightly said,

**"This is not what I call discreet, Kim. You go on a blind date in my restaurant."**

Jennie's initial stun over seeing her was instantly replaced by anger.

Her brows jerked together as she spat back,

**"And you agreed on a blind date in your own restaurant! That's not exercising discretion either, Manoban!"**

**"Lisa!"**

A man in casual shirt and jeans, about Lisa's age and height, called out as he approached their table.

Lisa looked up and gave her business partner a tight smile, annoyed at being disrupted.

**"Chanwoo,"**

she curtly said.

**"Sorry to intrude on your little gathering,"**

Chanwoo said apologetically sensing a strange vibe from the group which he assumed was because of his appearance. Seulgi afforded him a brief nod while Jennie gave him a look of recognition.

**"I--uhh--left papers for you to sign. They're important."**

**"Thanks, Chan."**

Came Lisa's short response.

Knowing when he wasn't wanted, Chanwoo sidled from their booth but not before saying,

**"Oh, nice to see you again Jennie."**

And without waiting for a reply, he left the restaurant the same way Nayeon did.

**"See that?"**

Jennie waved a hand in Chanwoo's direction, anger lacing her voice.

**"He knows me. What will they think when it turned out I**

**wasn't your date?"**

**"Nayeon chose this place not me. I do not date other women in the places I own."**

**"You could have declined!"**

**"So could you!"**

Seulgi chose to interrupt the two, raising her hand like a scared pupil in a classroom.

**"Actually, Jennie, I forced her to come,"**

she nervously said as soon as Jennie looked at her.

**"She's been faith--"**

**"Oh don't even bother! I'm sure she wanted to come,"**

Jennie snapped.

**"I don't need you to defend her. I know what a player she is."**

**"You scare me,"**

Seulgi declared unconsciously inching to the edge of the booth.

Jennie ignored this and focused back on Lisa, the angry flush stealing up her cheeks.

**"You find the nerve to criticize my decisions when you're the one who laid down the rules on us dating other people."**

Her dark hazel eyes narrowed.

**"I said--I do not date other women in my own establishments."**

**"I do not date period."**

Lisa refused to believe her claim about not dating, that what she said was just a way to make her feel guilty, that she was an inconsiderate husband, but her unwavering stare and the contempt

in her voice told Lisa that she is telling the truth.

**"Guys--"**

Seulgi interceded again.

**"Will you butt out of their business!"**

Irene suddenly scolded Seulgi, her eyes glaring while Lisa and Jennie continued to argue on one side of the booth.

**"Aren't you going to stop them? This will not end well and people are beginning to stare!"**

With an apathetic glance over the disputing couple, Irene unperturbedly said,

**"Stop them? Are you kidding me? This is better than television!"**

Seulgi drew back looking at Irene like she sprouted another head.

**"You scare me more than her."**

**Enjoy reading guys and stay hydrated always :)**

## [5] Truce - M!

Seulgi couldn't be thankful enough for the arrival of the food merely four minutes after Irene decided to order.

The waiter had perfect timing in her opinion and if it didn't look weird, she would have hugged the uniformed staff named Felix for serving the delectable array of dishes before the married couple's issues blew up into bigger proportions and ruin not just her day but the restaurant's reputation as well.

Two plates of moderately sized crab cakes were served as a starter dish which effectively cut off the unending argument between Lisa and Jennie. Each plate of crab cake made for an excellent appetizer for two people. And needless to say, Lisa and Jennie will share one plate while Irene, looking positively aghast by the idea, gets to share with Seulgi.

They all began to eat the flavorful and crispy dish in silence but the married pair would constantly exchange annoyed gazes like four-year-old kids who were being forced to play nice by their parents.

Lisa's carefully constructed façade gave no hint that deep inside, after coming to terms with her wife meeting some guy on a blind date, she is actually quite pleased over the turn out of their situation. Not just for the reason that she's the person she's supposed to date or that she remained faithful to their marriage despite the agreement to date other people, but because she wants to redeem herself for the ass she's been.

It wasn't just her appearance, even if it does play a key into her decision – wearing a purple sleeveless silk and cotton top over tight jeans that looked so stylish and sexy on her, the gorgeous face with captivating chocolate eyes fringed with curly lashes, her shiny hair that was casually brushed yet still looked elegant, and the proud way she held her own against her whirlwind of words – not even because she wanted to end her self-imposed celibacy, but because

she decided in the last ten minutes of their argument that maybe it would be easier for both of them if they give their arrangement a chance.

And all sexual innuendos aside, she has no explanation for her sudden interest to get to know her. What she does know is that it's the right thing to do as her husband and as the person who benefitted from being married to her. Besides, it wouldn't hurt to develop some sort of friendship with her rather than waste four years pretending that their marriage doesn't exist.

Although, for now, she would be caught dead before she admits that to anyone. And she wasn't really sure how the cogs in her brain works when the matter at hand concerns her.

For Jennie's part, behind the exasperation that was mostly directed at her own person for rising to Lisa's gibes, Jennie strived to compose her emotions. It irked her to see that Lisa, in a casual pastel blue body hugging shirt with dark low riding jeans, remains her cool and calm self whilst arguing with her whereas she already had steam seeping out of her nose and ears and probably looking like a bull ready to attack.

And those damn mesmerizing eyes of hers that unwaveringly held her gaze made it even harder for her to get a grip on her temper. It should be a sin to have those eyes. It's distracting!

*Damn her for being so sinfully beautiful and arrogant and calm!*

She slowly exhaled a pent-up breath and lowered her eyes since it's the only way to get her mind thinking rationally again.

As far as she could recall, between herself and Irene, she had always been the calm one. She wasn't easily fazed by troublesome people, unlike her friend who tends to overreact and blow up in a snap. But from where she was sitting, it would seem like their roles were suddenly reversed.

Irene is as cool as a potentate and she was effectively keeping Seulgi in her place with her icy glares.



*Why can't she handle Lisa like that?*

How hard can it be to control another woman especially when said woman is your husband?

She had to admit she's never been an expert in the women with male organs species having only two boyfriends in the past to base her experience on but even her exes weren't as difficult as Lisa.

She has this effect on her that she couldn't quite put a finger on. It is a strange feeling of attraction. But the more she fought against it, reminding herself time and time again that she's nothing to her, that apathy is the only emotion she should feel for her, and that she's simply an instrument to prevent Chaerin from robbing her of the inheritance, the harder it is to brush off.

By the time the waiter cleared away the appetizer plates and served the entrees of mesquite grilled surf and turf, sashimi grade ahi tuna, classic ceasar salad and rib eye steak topped with grilled oyster mushrooms, Jennie had cooled her temper considerably.

She drew in a steadying air, lifted her eyes back at her husband and said,

**"Lisa, this is getting us nowhere. Nayeon is right. We are all at fault here."**

She was correct of course. Lisa knew that and she is thankful that she's making an effort on being civil with her now.

**"Yeah,"**

she concurred.

**"This is counterproductive. Let's just get on with this date like how a date should be."**

**"Can we at least be polite with each other? Like mature adults?"**

She asked her then eyed Irene.

**"And I mean all four of us, Irene."**

**"Fine,"**

Irene heaved with her trademark eye roll.

Lisa nodded with a smile, nothing too big or too bright that it would've looked fake. It was just the right smile for their truce.

**"Thank goodness!"**

Seulgi tooted.

Jennie giggled at the relief in Seulgi's tone, the infectious sound carried around their table making Seulgi laugh and even caused Irene to smile. Lisa was delighted to hear the humor in her giggle, as a result she found herself joining in the hilarity of their situation.

She waited a moment for their mirth to subside, then addressed Jennie,

**"Is this your first time here in Lawry's The Prime Rib?"**

**"Yes . . . I think it's a fantastic place and so far the food is great,"**

Jennie replied sincerely.

**"I'm excited for dessert though."**

**"If you like chocolate, Jen, you will enjoy the chocolate mousse here,"**

Seulgi said quickly easing into a comfortable conversation with her.

**"It's heavenly."**

**"You sound so gay!"**

Irene exclaimed.

**"Hey!"**

Seulgi objected with a frown.

But Irene being Irene wasn't to be daunted.

**"When a woman says it's heavenly and she's not referring to a man . . . that's a red flag right there.**

"

Lisa chuckled but she opted to out herself from her best friend's *problem*

with Irene. She wanted to focus on Jennie right now who was currently shaking her head at their bickering friends.

**"I'm curious . . ."**

She began tentatively letting the phrase hang to catch her attention.

She took the bait, eyeing her skeptically.

**"About what?"**

**"You said you do not date. Why did you agree to this one? What's so important about this blind date?"**

She smiled sheepishly and her eyes gained a playful glint in them.

**"Well . . . Irene thought it's a good way to find a man."**

Lisa slightly tensed at this.

**"For . . . whom?"**

She asked uncertainly.

**"For the shoot."**

Her brows knitted in perplexity. She was expecting her to say either for Irene or worse, for her.

**"Shoot?"**

Jennie bit her lower lip to stop herself from laughing at her baffled face.

**"I photograph people for a living. And my clientele are mostly from the fashion industry,"**

she elucidated.

**"I'm doing a shoot for Chanel for Elle magazine. The male model didn't show -- so we've needed a man since nine o'clock this morning. But since we're hoping that our date would be men, we thought one of them can fill up as the replacement for us. We're kinda on a deadline so anyone, whether it's a man or a woman replacement, would suffice already."**

**"Geez, that is serious!"**

She affirmed with sham gravity her eyes turning into an engaging shade of brown and a charming smile curved her lips.

**"Maybe I can help you look for a replacement. I have some friends who can be poster guys or girls. What are you looking for exactly?"**

**"You'll do that?"**

**"Sure."**

**"That's great!"**

Irene cut in before Jennie could form a reply and she vigorously began talking like Lisa is a long-time peer of hers.

**"I didn't think you'd have that many guy or lady friends considering your extra friendliness with the ladies but we'll take whatever you give us--except her."**

She pointed at Seulgi who was instantly affronted.

**"We're desperate to make the deadline but not that desperate. And in case you're wondering, I'm in charge of Chanel's PR that's why I'm involved in this. Jen, tell her what kind of**

**replacement you need."**

Lisa was slightly taken aback by Irene's forwardness and her ability to slur both her and Seulgi while accepting her offer of help but she did not comment on it. Instead, she shifted her gaze at Jennie and quirked a brow at her, mutely telling her to describe the person she needed.

**"Well . . . he or she has to be handsome or beautiful of course. Or could be both,"**

she began haltingly smiling at the interested faces of Lisa and Seulgi then continued on,

**"The replacement has to be honed enough to look good in a suit. For the guy, he has to be muscular but not too much. We don't want him looking like a wrestler. For the woman, she should be tall, well-built like lean body, broad shoulders and I think, with dirty-blond hair and dark brown eyes or..."**

She trailed off abruptly her eyes growing into big round orbs as Irene unexpectedly gasped out loud. They faced each other like crazed fan girls who saw a favorite celebrity that they were planning to mob. They nodded in unison and clapped hands in a hi-five.

Not only did they bewilder Lisa and Seulgi who were eyeing them skeptically but they also alarmed them with the eccentric behavior they were exhibiting.

**"Will anyone care to explain?"**

Seulgi voiced out a bit hesitantly, probably for fear of being snapped at again by Irene.

**"I love you guys!"**

Irene exclaimed with exhilaration then dug into her bag for her cell phone.

Lisa's lips twitched but her face remained placid.



**"Just let her come out, Mae."**

But when Lisa stepped from behind the excited stylist, Jennie had to tell herself to suck in some air and cool down the sudden warm flush that was rising to her cheeks.

She wore a gray suit with black lining detail, white shirt and black pants that she filled out beautifully from the chest and arms down to the legs. Her slightly wavy long strands of dirty blonde hair were tied in a low ponytail, the strands not tied were swept behind about her ears, temples and forehead in engaging disarray. She had an effortless look that is a cross between being girly and manly. And Jennie knew Maeng took advantage of this when she styled her.

*She's yummy alright.*

Jennie thought, giving Maeng a fleeting look that says she agrees with her assessment.

She certainly wasn't expecting this. Lisa had more than looks, more than bone structure, effervescent skin and come-hither eyes . . . she has charisma and is oozing with too much sex appeal. It was the kind photographers search for but rarely come across. In her opinion, she is perfect!

Realizing she had been staring with her mouth agape like a drooling idiot, she smiled at her husband animatedly, pacing back and forth as she motioned for her to step into the camera frame and sit on the eighteenth century looking chair that was positioned next to an equally archaic wooden cabinet.

She obliged without question, smiling back at her.

**"Lisa, will you do something for me?"**

She asked.

**"Name it."**

**"Sit still, hunch forward just a little and lean your elbows on your thigh close to your knee,"**

she instructed already switching to her professional mode.

**"Don't smile. I want the serious look."**

**"Okay . . ."**

Lisa answered, following her. This day is turning out rather well for the Thai woman and she has no intention of screwing it over with a dumb ass remark or attitude.

**"Not angry—just serious."**

Jennie shot her a critical look, tipping her head on one side to study her pose.

**"That's perfect,"**

she said then abruptly lowered her height to level with hers. She lifted her pinkie between her brow and forehead to move her hair from creating a shadow over her striking eyes.

Lisa was taken aback by the nearness of her face to hers. She didn't know if she realized it but their lips were at an easy kissing distance. She wondered how she'll react if she just went ahead and kiss her.

*Annoyed, for sure.*

The voice in her head answered.

Carefully she swallowed, trying to blot out her wife's closeness, her sweet scent and the misplaced thoughts of kissing a photographer at work.

**"You're good at this,"**

she complimented to divert her not so platonic thoughts, staring straight into her eyes.

She finally glanced at her, grinned, squared her shoulders and stood up to her full height.



**"Thanks, but I'm sure you haven't seen my work yet. You can compliment me again later after we're done."**

She laughed nicely, leaning back on the chair and losing the pose.

**"Sure! I'm getting paid for this, aren't I?"**

**"Oh, that depends on how your photos will come out. So you'd better be good,"**

she warned teasingly.

**"And please go back to your pose. Stay still."**

She eyed the upward tilt of her lips as she mocked her. When she smiled, her eyes smiled with her gums showing and again the urge to press her lips against hers re-emerged.

**"Oops. Sorry,"**

she amended posing back.

**"Jen, I'm out! Nice to finally meet you, Ms. Manoban."**

Maeng hollered on her way out of the room as Jennie walked off the set and was about to begin shooting Lisa.

**"Enjoy yourselves alone. Be productive--if you get my drift!"**

**"Shoo! Just go."**

Jennie waved her off, slightly flustered by the insinuation.

**"Thanks for coming, Mae."**

Maeng bade goodbye and vanished through the door.

**"Okay, here we go, Lisa. Ready?"**

She asked.

**"As ready as I'll ever be."**



first got married. And she wasn't only enjoying herself with this new side of her but she was slowly falling under the magnetism of her good looks.

**"Thanks,"**

she mumbled then averted her eyes suddenly ill at ease.

She heard her chuckle softly before she stated,

**"Does Irene decide on my payment?"**

**"Yes."**

Jennie looked back at her. She couldn't possibly want payment this instant. She's not exactly a person in dire need of money.

**"Why?"**

In answer, she languidly arose from the divan, paced forward two steps to get to her and bent over a startled Jennie, leaning her hands on the armrest of the seat she occupied. Her face was so close to her that their noses were almost touching.

**"I will have to collect payment now,"**

she averred huskily then without delay moved her arms, scooping Jennie off her seat giving her no time to react.

She stepped back and plunked down on her divan once again with Jennie on her lap.

**"Lisa . . ."**

Jennie said a little disoriented from the immediate change in position and the sudden rise of temperature surrounding them.

**"I--we . . ."**

**"Remember when I said I like kissing you . . ."**

She whispered running a hand over her back and arms in a gentle caress that was meant to sway her.

If her words weren't obvious enough, there was also no mistaking the intent in her eyes as she held her firmly in place. Jennie was captivated by the hoarse timbre of Lisa's voice and the feel of her rough hands on her skin.

**"Y—yes."**

**"I still want to,"**

she said huskily then straight away claimed her lips for a kiss.

Jennie is aware she's threading on shaky ground and she knows once she gives in, it will be difficult to pull back. But how could she deny her compelling lips or her own desire to kiss her? Lisa's magnetism was overpowering everything she believed to be sensible at the moment. Her thoughts are going haywire at the first brush of the Thai woman's lips.

In a heartbeat, she kissed back. Slow and hesitant at first as they grazed their lips against the other, reorienting with the feel of it. Her hands went around her neck and rested there gently playing with the baby hairs at ends of her nape.

For Lisa it was six months overdue. It was enlivening to be able to kiss her again. She struggled to control her craving of her lest her fervor scares her. But it was hard especially for someone who has been two months celibate and having unfulfilled sexual fantasies of the same girl that was on her lap and kissing her back.

Jennie sensed the gradual change in her kiss as the seconds ticked past. The tenderness was gone as her mouth enticed hers, her tongue flicked at the crease and slid over her bottom lip asking for entrance.

She gave it without a qualm opening her mouth and matching the urgency of Lisa's kiss. She tormented her with hard, demanding kisses as their tongues dueled endlessly. Her hands roamed her sides, back and arms at an impatient pace, lifting one of her leg over the other side of the divan so that she was now straddling her. Then her hands slid inside her blouse connecting with her flat stomach as it inched up over her ribs.

They pulled back slightly for much needed air, enough for Lisa to take her top off tossing it carelessly on the floor while she did the same to her dress shirt. The next moment, Lisa reached around her body to unclasp the black bra and took hold of her freed breasts, kneading them slowly with her rough palms.

Her lips rested by her ear kissing it, making her shiver in delight. It trailed leisurely down her neck nipping at the smooth column then over her aching breast until it latched hard on her nipples.

The cry that had been lodged in Jennie's throat erupted as she arched her back and held her head pressed up to her body. Lisa took her time alternately kissing the sensitized nub while Jennie's body fired up.

She was heady with pleasure and she could feel herself getting wet as her confined erection grew from under her. She is aroused as hell and so is the brunette on her lap. They continued making out on the divan fervently, unmindful of the beeping sound of the photo machine.

Nothing else mattered to Jennie. She forgot everything. She could only see, hear and feel Lisa and she responded to her without reservation. And it was undoubtedly arousing Lisa even more.

In a bold move, as their mouths fused ardently, her hand traced the waistband of her jeans and snapped open the button. It suddenly wasn't enough to see her topless, Lisa wanted to touch her core as well, just like in her dreams.

But as she slid down the zipper of her jeans the loud banging of metal doors echoed inside the room they were in, followed by the familiar voice of Irene yelling,

**"Jen! Aren't you done with Manoban yet?"**

They immediately stopped.

She was done alright. She was done with the cloud of passion that fogged her brain.

**"Lisa let go!"**

She hissed, frantically looking around from her straddled position for her bra and top.

**"Come on! She can't see us like this."**

Her eyes glinted at her like a dark spark, one arm firmly circled around her waist. Clearly, she's still under the spell of lust. She wasn't letting her get off her lap.

**"Why not? This is a perfectly normal position for couples,"**

she argued.

She gawked at her nonchalance.

**"Are you crazy?! We're half naked!"**

Lisa bent sideways without letting her up and grabbed the items of clothing on the floor.

**"Here."**

They managed to put on their clothes just in time as Irene strode past the door and immediately stopped dead in her tracks when she saw them on the divan. Jennie was straddling Lisa, her lips swollen, and she looked flushed. Lisa was no different except her hair was sticking out in all directions and her eyes still had a hazy glimmer in them.

**"Well, well, well . . . looks like Ms. and Mrs. We-Hate-Each-Other-So-Much got past the hatin' and jumped on to some frisky lovin',"**

Irene commented in an all knowing tone, crossing her arms to her chest and quirking one perfectly shaped brow.

**"I hope other than this, you two at least got some work done."**

**"Yes."**

They answered at the same time which made Irene smirk widely. Jennie groaned in embarrassment and impulsively buried her face

in the crook of Lisa's neck while the latter cradled the back of her head with her hand.

**"I never thought I'd say this but this Sunday is by far the most entertaining one I've ever had!"**

Irene announced with a roguish laugh then whirled around, her laughter resonating inside the room behind her wake as she finally left them be.

**"I hate you,"**

Jennie muttered morosely at her neck.

Lisa smiled, stroking her hair.

**"Of course you do,"**

she agreed gamely sliding down the strap of Jennie's blouse and kissing her exposed shoulder.

**"But we should get back to frisky lovin'. . ."**

**I'll be updating this whenever I have time ^^**

**And I hope you're having a good time reading this :P**

## **[6] Stop and Think**

**"So what went down with you and Manoban?"**

Irene asked as soon as Jennie answered the call.

Jennie tucked the phone between her ear and shoulder, clutched the heavy binder filled with photos with both hands and used her hip to close the car door.

**"This is the third time you asked! Will you please give it a rest?"**

**"And what? Forget what I saw last night? No freakin' way!"**

Irene said in a winded up tone

**. "You went bang-bang with her after I left, didn't you?"**

Jennie groaned as she began climbing up the stairs to the east wing, nodding a brief greeting at one of the servants in the house.

**"No! We just . . . made out."**

**"What the hell are you high school?!"**

She shrieked that had Jennie wincing at the sound.

**"Just admit it, Jen. I won't say I told you so . . . promise."**

She adjusted the binder over her right hip and held the phone with the other hand.

**"Why do I get this feeling you are disappointed we didn't have sex?"**

**"You were both hot and bothered when I saw you! It's Manoban we're talking about here. I don't believe she'll be well**



**served with a simple stroll in the park. Of course she'll want to ride the swing!"**

**"Well, we didn't!"**

Jennie said as she finally reached her room, placed the binder on the working table and threw herself down on the bed. It has been a long and exhausting day shooting on location in the outskirts of L.A. She could really use bath right now.

But Irene wasn't planning on ending the call just yet.

**"Man! It must have been extremely painful for her,"**

she snickered.

**"But—I know you're not the jump 'em and do 'em kinda' girl, Jen—she's your husband though. Why'd you stop it from going further? And don't tell me you didn't like it because I will not believe you."**

Jennie stared at the ceiling taking time to process the question. It wasn't that she didn't like Lisa touching her. God knows Jennie craves the Thai woman's touch and not even her exes have been able to elicit a strong reaction from her with a simple kiss, unlike Lisa. The effect of Lisa's touch drives her senseless and whatever self-possession she has instantly flies out the window at the first brush of her lips.

*So why did she stop it?*

**"Jennie? You still with me?"**

**"Yeah. Uhh—it was too fast,"**

she admitted with a sigh.

There was silence at Irene's end then Jennie heard her sigh as well. Irene intuitively knows what prompted her best friend's decision.

**"Did you tell her that?"**

**"No. I just said we should stop."**

**"And she accepted that? She didn't ask?"**

**"She—"**

Jennie slightly frowned remembering Lisa's reaction.

**"She just stared at me for a very long time and slowly nodded. No questions asked."**

**"Talk about awkward. I'm surprised she didn't leave you there after that."**

**"That's the thing, Rene. She still stayed to wait for me. I kept telling her it was okay for her to just leave."**

**"That's kinda'...nice of her,"**

Irene conveyed with surprise.

**"So did anything change between you and her in the last 24-hours after the make out?"**

**"We haven't seen each other since we went on opposite wings of this house last night,"**

Jennie admitted, again feeling bad for giving no explanation to Lisa whatsoever.

**"And I was busy today."**

**"Who isn't?! Today is Monday. Everybody is busy."**

**"I should talk to her,"**

Jennie stated more as a question.

**"If I were you, I would. I'm not exactly going Pro-Manoban here but with the way she acted after you stopped her, she at least deserves it, don't you think?"**

Irene voiced out reasonably.

**"Yes, she does."**

Jennie admitted softly.

**"Remember Taehyung back in junior college? He wasn't exactly cordial when I told him I wasn't ready to have sex with him. He was furious with me. Funny thing is, Taehyung said he loves me...so I hoped he would understand. But he never did."**

**"But Manoban did understand...or whatever you call it...even when you gave no reason and I'm sure love isn't on her mind when she accepted your decision."**

**"Maybe she isn't as bad as we made her out to be."**

**"Well...you have enough time—four years and a half actually—to find out."**

**"Crap! I keep forgetting I'm married,"**

Jennie grunted as she heard Irene laugh.

**"It happens—you know, so I've been told by other married people."**

**"Yeah right! Listen, Rene, I badly need a shower. We'll talk later, okay?"**

**"Yeah, yeah. Bye."**

Jennie sprung out of bed immediately after Irene hung up. She carelessly tossed the phone on the bed and began undressing. She was sticky and stinky and gross from being outside too long.

Since last year, she's been getting many offers to do photo shoots for some important personas in the fashion world and the concept for these shoots gets weirder and crazier each time. Location shoots are always a pain, probably her least favorite but she loves photography and she can't argue with the fact that it does pay well.

Sighing, she stepped inside the shower and let the water run down her aching muscles. Then after a few minutes of enjoying the

warmth of the spray, she went on to cleaning herself.

Setting aside her work concerns, Jennie let her mind drift back to Lisa. She hasn't been able to remove Lisa from her head since last night. The whole day at work thoughts of her...the hours she spent with her yesterday doing the shoot, her charming personality and her ability to kiss her senseless...lingered at the back of her mind.

She tried to rationalize it by thinking that it's because although they parted amicably last night, she didn't exactly try to let her know why she stopped the make out session when it was quite obvious she wanted the intimacy as much as she did.

If she were in her shoe, she would want an explanation for sure. She feels guilty. That's all there is to it. Once she gets her chance to talk to her, her head will surely forget their little episode in the studio and her mind won't be bothered by thoughts of Lisa.

*Easy as pie, right?*

Well, at least she hopes so.

By the time she finished with her shower and was getting into a lime cotton smock dress, Jennie decided to wait out for Lisa downstairs and talk to her before the night is over. She picked up her phone on the bed, checked the time that registered 7 PM and went out to head to the kitchen first.

She was mentally rehearsing what she will say to Lisa while she grabbed a cup of yogurt in the fridge and the pack of gummy bears sitting next to the cookie jar and bringing them to the center counter of the kitchen for a light snack.

Unaware that a pair of amused hazel eyes is watching from the kitchen entry, Jennie opened the yogurt and mixed a handful of gummy bears in them then spooned the mixture into her mouth.

She nearly choked on the gummies she was chewing when Lisa's laugh cut through the silence of the kitchen and languidly strode inside to sit on the stool next to her. She covered her mouth with her hand and began chomping on the remaining gummies as fast as

she can.

She wasn't expecting the Thai woman to find her. But it's probably better like this since she won't have to wait any longer to talk to her and even if it's a little embarrassing being seen with your mouth full of gummy candies, she'll take it if only to let Lisa's agreeable disposition continue.

Peering over the cup of yogurt, Lisa scrunched her nose at her choice of snack and continued to chuckle.

**"You're cute,"**

she said, reaching a hand to wipe off with her thumb the small smudge of yogurt at the corner of her lip.

**"And a little bit messy too."**

Finally swallowing, she pouted at her amused face and objected,

**"I'm not messy! You surprised me so the yogurt spilled out a bit."**

**"Or your mouth is stuffed with this weird combination that's why!"**

**"Want some?"**

She offered a spoonful to her, smiling widely.

Leaning away slightly, Lisa shook her head vigorously.

**"Thanks but I just ate. No more space here,"**

she replied tapping her stomach over the black shirt she was wearing.

It was Jennie's turn to laugh at the disgust in Lisa's face.

**"That's too bad. This is delicious stuff and healthy too."**

**"You sound like a sales rep."**

**"Obviously not a very good one since I can't convince you to try this,"**

she shot back to continue the light banter, taking a manageable portion of the yogurt into her mouth. But she was keenly waiting for an opening to broach the subject of last night to her.

**"Are you crazy? That—"**

She retorted pointing at the yogurt like it's deadly.

**"—will probably ruin my mood."**

That was exactly the opening Jennie needed and she immediately seized the chance.

**"You're in a good mood then?"**

**"Why wouldn't I be? Watching you eat this shit buoyed me up more."**

Trying to keep her smile, Jennie pushed the cup of yogurt to the other side, leaned against the counter and said,

**"I just thought you'd be in a bad mood after last night..."**

She fell silent abruptly and the amusement on her beautiful face was replaced by a grave look. She didn't look angry, Jennie observed, which is good because she really didn't want to fight with her.

Lisa leaned on the counter as well so that their elbows were touching and glanced at her, waiting for her to begin talking.

**"Lisa...I don't know what came over me after Irene left but I sort of felt..."**

Jennie tried gathering her wits under the Thai woman's penetrating gaze. It's like she is looking straight into her soul trying to see if she's telling the truth. She felt uneasy. Lisa is making her nervous when she doesn't have any reason to be. She shook off the

nervousness and forced her mind to focus. When she couldn't find a proper word to use, she said instead,

**"I—I like kissing you. I won't deny that. You obviously know this. But...last night happened a bit too fast—"**

Lisa's eyes narrowed and when she spoke there was a note of exasperation in her voice.

**"Jennie, we were married before knowing each other. We kissed on our wedding night right after an argument and we both know it wasn't a simple kiss. If Seulgi hadn't called me that night, I'm sure we would've ended up having our honeymoon and enjoying it too. So when you say fast, what exactly do you mean?"**

Telling herself to stay calm once again and concentrate on getting her reasons across, she plunged on,

**"I mean, maybe we should try to get to know each other before anything else. We will be in this marriage for four more years, Lisa. This is not a casual romp in the park."**

Jennie was silently hoping she would understand her sentiments because in all sincerity she really wants to befriend her and at least make the remaining four years of their marriage worthwhile.

**"That maybe true for you since you're a woman with special needs but not for me. I'm not like the other girls you date...or whatever you call them."**

She paused trying to read Lisa's facial expression. When she couldn't, she added,

**"I'd rather go back to pretending I'm single than have a relationship that revolves around fighting then making out."**

Lisa stayed mute even after she was done talking. For a brief second, she looked expectantly at her waiting for a reaction then closed her eyes with a heavy sigh and returned her attention back on the unfinished cup of yogurt.

Who was she kidding? She will never understand that she wants to have her dignity intact after their marriage is over.

All Lisa wants is to be able to exercise her right to fuck her and for her to do that without forcing herself on her, she's hell bent on playing the nice guy act. Well, at least she said her piece already. Whether she accepts it or not is entirely up to her.

Lisa took everything she said to heart. She was right again of course. Their relationship via the arranged marriage is based upon

*nothing*

and when all of it is over, she will walk away unscathed while she will have lost more than time. Between the two of them, Jennie is the aggrieved party so to speak. She's only trying to protect herself, her values, and rightfully so.

Lisa is so strung with sexual tension that she forgets the fact her wife is not one of her flings. The independent, strong willed, intelligent and gorgeous girl that is sitting next to her has her last name. And looking at her right now, with her hopeful brown eyes fleetingly gazing back at her, a small seed of pride and admiration took root inside of her.

After Niki, she has treated women with the same aloof attitude, never getting too attached or too involved in their lives. She chooses them based on sexual attraction alone. In short, she never lets any girl get close enough to have even the slightest effect on her. If anyone dares to cross the line, she dumps them like yesterday's garbage. It's her rule. She's determined not to repeat the same foolishness she did with Niki.

But with Jennie, maybe because she's her wife and like it or not she's obligated by law to stick by her for five years as per her father's will, she's surprisingly willing to bend the rules she set on herself regarding relationships with the opposite sex. And last night, when she didn't leave her after being denied satisfaction, which as far as she could remember never happened to her before, was proof of that.



Making up her mind, Lisa straightened and whirled sideways on the stool so that she was facing her. She has nothing to lose by befriending her and if she plays her cards right, she might even get to consummate their marriage.

**"Let's start over, shall we then?"**

Lisa said congenially.

**"What do you mean?"**

Jennie hesitantly asked also swinging sideways to face her, finding Lisa's sudden change in demeanor strange. She was expecting something close to ire after that speech she just gave.

With a lopsided grin, she extended a hand for her to shake and said,

**"Hi, I'm Lisa Manoban."**

Jennie couldn't help the bubble of laughter from escaping her lips. She gladly clasped her hand and shook it good naturedly.

**"Hi Lisa! I'm Jennie Kim—I mean, Manoban. Jennie Manoban."**

**"Good save,"**

she winked playfully but did not let go of her hand.

**"It's nice to meet you, Nini. Is it okay if I call you that? Jennie is a bit too common. Besides, everyone's been calling you that already."**

**"Yes, Nini is good,"**

she answered, beaming and liking how the name rolls smoothly from her mouth.

**"So Nini, in the spirit of getting to know each other, would you like to go out with me tonight?"**

**"Go out with you? Like a date?"**

She asked pretending to be coy while ignoring the jolt of electricity

from their joined hands.

She continued to stroke the back of Jennie's hand with her thumb.

**"Yes. Like a date."**

**"And may I know where this date will be?"**

**"Does that mean you'll go?"**

**"Maybe..."**

Jennie was cut short by Lisa's ringing phone that she placed earlier on the countertop. They both looked at it and then back at each other.

**"Aren't you gonna' take that?"**

She asked when Lisa made no move to answer the caller.

**"It's just Seulgi."**

**"It's probably important."**

Lisa exhaled noisily like she was being forced to do a tedious task but picked the call anyway.

**"What?"**

She spoke into the phone a little curtly.

They were still holding hands even as Lisa talked with Seulgi and Jennie herself made no move to withdraw her own hand from her grasp, but she did feel discomfited sitting there hearing the conversation between the two.

She eased her hand so that she can leave to give them some privacy but Lisa tightened her grip on it.

**"Talk to Nini. I'll come only when she wants to,"**

Lisa said to Seulgi then handed the phone to her.

**"Who the hell is Nini?!"**

Jennie heard Seulgi's query from the other side of the call before she spoke,

**"Hey Seulgi!"**

**"Jennie?! Lisa called you Nini?"**

Seulgi echoed, flabbergasted.

**"She gave you a nickname!"**

**"Yes! It's a shocker, isn't it?"**

She affirmed, suppressing a giggle.

**"Hell yeah! She doesn't give girls nicknames coz' half the time she doesn't even bother with their real names,"**

Seulgi revealed.

**"But anyway, you should come with Lisa. I'm having a housewarming party at this new beach front property. It's supposed to be next week but I figured what the hell! Now is as good as any. So what do you say, Mrs. Manoban?"**

Her gaze lingered on Lisa as the latter continued to stroke her hand. She fought against the tingling feeling of her warm hand to tell Seulgi,

**"Sure. We'll be there."**

Lisa smiled as she handed back the phone and said,

**"We'll have to wear our rings for this date, Nini."**

**"Not a problem. I have mine with me."**

She pulled her necklace from inside the neckline of the dress to show the ring hanging as a pendant on the chain.

**"Do you have yours?"**



Seeing the dark scowl on Lisa's face, Jennie interrupted before the two get into a spat.

**"Seulgi, don't worry about us. We'll manage. You should get back to your...uhh...guests."**

**"Thanks Jen. Lisa, I know you wanted to introduce Jen to our friends but..."**

Seulgi winced as she heard a crash downstairs.

**"I'm really sorry!"**

She amended and quickly sprinted to check on the commotion.

Lisa shook her head at Seulgi's retreating back and pulled Jennie in the opposite direction to the sliding glass doors leading to a balcony with a spiral staircase going up to the rooftop.

**"Come on. Let's stay up there. I think it's quieter,"**

Lisa answered to her quizzical eyes.

**"We can talk better and I'm not really in the mood to mingle with strangers."**

Jennie nodded and followed her up the metal steps still reeling from what Seulgi said about Lisa wanting to acquaint her with friends of hers. She shook the feeling off and reminded herself that she is only being nice to get into her pants sooner.

They were greeted by the fresh breeze coming from the beach as they stepped into the unused rooftop deck that had tables, chairs, a chaise and a blue pool table.

**"Wow! This is nice,"**

she said, walking past Lisa to rest on the chaise facing the beach area. She removed her sandals and stretched her legs out in front of her inhaling the beach air.

Realizing that Lisa was just standing there watching her, Jennie

furled back her legs and tapped the now empty space of the chaise motioning her to sit by her.

Lisa complied, intently studying her face and the artless cascade of her brunette curls that seemed to glow from the illumination of the yellow lights at the corners of the rooftop.

**"You're so beautiful,"**

she suddenly said almost in awe which stupefied Jennie.

She blinked and promptly blushed at the compliment but quickly covered it up with a deprecating remark directed at herself.

**"You wouldn't have said that when I was in high school,"**

she said.

**"I'm part of the nerdy bunch. I was chubby and a klutz too. Jocks used to pick on the likes of me and from where I'm sitting I'd say you were a jock then."**

Lisa grinned. If what she's saying is true, she's way past that phase now. In her view, time and nature did a wonderful job with her physical maturity. Whatever traces of insecurity she might have had then is now replaced by cool poise and innate allure that any guy will find attractive.

With an effort, Lisa resisted the urge to pull her into her embrace and kiss her shy smile.

**"Don't tell anyone but I was the jock who likes nerds,"**

she confided in jest.

**"Nerds know stuff that can blow your mind."**

She lightly slapped her arm not missing the sexual allusion in her retort.

**"Ugh! Your mind is so—gutter! I won't be shocked to know you have a sexual offense record somewhere."**

**"It's the other way around. I'm always the victim. Girls just can't get enough of me."**

**"God, I'm married to a swaggering woman whore!"**

She moaned in consternation and slumped back on the chaise pretending to be thoroughly distressed.

Lisa couldn't help but laugh at how cute she was being. Although she resolved to make an effort to get to know her, she didn't expect to actually enjoy her company for the reason that she wouldn't be able to be intimate with her like the other night.

The time she spends with girls usually didn't involve much talk. Surprisingly with Jennie, she's not bored—but the desire to be bodily close is still clamoring in her veins. And it didn't help that she looks absolutely fetching in the lime green dress with her legs primly tucked under her.

**"So is there anything else that you want to know about me aside from what you already assumed?"**

Lisa asked to keep her mind away from distracting thoughts of what is underneath her dress.

Tipping her head back on the chaise, she gazed up the dark sky, thinking of a good question to start with. She sat up straight after a minute and hesitantly asked,

**"Why did you marry me, Lisa?"**

Startled by her serious choice of query, Lisa saw the solemn look in her eyes—like whatever answer she gives will placate the curiosity in her head. She opted to be honest with her.

**"Because by marrying you my family's business will be gaining more than stocks and funds but properties as well that is beneficial to the company's growth,"**

she said simply.

**"It's your reasons I want to hear. I know it's part of your**

**father's will. But what are you getting out of this marriage?"**

Peering at her, Jennie matched the blunt honesty of her reply.

**"Assurance. Assurance that Chaerin will not get her greedy paws on my inheritance because I'm married to you."**

**"But she's your mother—"**

**"Stepmother. My mom died on a driving accident when I was fifteen,"**

she clarified with a sad smile.

**"I'm sorry,"**

Lisa sincerely said and for the second time in mere minutes she had to fight the temptation of reaching out to touch her.

She shrugged dismissively but looked away staring back at the sky. When it seems like she wasn't about to say anything more, Lisa said,

**"So Chaerin chose me—she has good taste then."**

She shot her a glare and wryly averred,

**"Oh yes, she has good taste in full of yourself people like you! It's your parents that made an excellent choice in me."**

Lisa cracked up at her attempt at cockiness and yanked her into an embrace. Laughing, she buried her face in her glorious hair, unable to hold back her wanting to be physically close to her.

**"My arrogance has rubbed off on you Nini,"**

she whispered.

Leaning away from her arms to cover up the shiver that ran through her body, Jennie jeered,

**"And you finally admit you're arrogant! Thank you!"**

**"I admit it only to you,"**



Lisa proclaimed with a girlish grin.

**"Oh no! That means I will have to get used to this egotism for four years!"**

Jennie whined, teasing.

Lisa gazed at her lovely face, the teasing light in her eyes and her tempting mouth and pulled her back in her embrace.

**"This is harder than I thought."**

Jennie tensed at the bump of delight when her lean arms circled her body and her hand stroked her back. But she couldn't make herself draw back from her hold. Her body acquires a mind of its own whenever Lisa is this close to her.

**"Which part?"**

Lisa rubbed her jaw against her soft curls and murmured,

**"The keeping myself from kissing you senseless part."**

For lack of a better comeback, Jennie stayed quiet in her arms—unresisting but not responsive either. She hoped that Lisa would understand that she needs to stick by her stand to get to know her first before she reconsiders any of that closeness—even if she also wants it as much as she does.

*Fuck! This is hard.*

## [7] Firsts of Everything

In the eleven days following Seulgi's beach house party, both Lisa and Jennie were busy with their respective work.

They haven't seen much of each other and when they do, it was always short and hurried as one or the other is rushing off somewhere that was work related. Even their occasional phone calls to each other lasted no longer than five minutes.

Jennie was booked on a shoot for an upcoming issue of a major magazine and there were several models to photograph in various designer labels and set concepts but with very little time on her hands. Almost all kinds of delays—from the models being a pain, the wrong props, schedule conflicts and even equipment breakdown—were encountered. She was cramming to get photos submitted for approval by the creative team of the magazine.

Her stress level ran high. She spent longer hours in the studio than usual even sleeping there most nights, coming to the mansion only when she needs a fresh batch of clothes.

Lisa, on the other hand, spent most of the week at the site of the new restaurant Manoban Corporation is constructing. She met up with city engineers, architects, potential suppliers and employment agencies. She was personally overseeing the progress of the construction and at the same time making sure the future operations of the restaurant will be according to her plans. She has her hands full with details and sometimes mishaps that veer away from their target schedule.

She would come to the mansion very late at night or in the very early hours of the morning after having been in meetings with the marketing department of Manoban Corp. and once with the board when she was asked for an update on the project.

To say she is exhausted would be an understatement. The lure of

her bed for reasons of catching up on sleep has never been more tempting and by the end of nearly two weeks, she was dead set on just lazing around and not thinking about the restaurant.

Friday, she woke up at exactly ten in the morning and felt less crappy than the past days. She told her secretary yesterday to cancel all her meetings and appointments for the day so she has time to spend for herself ... and with Jennie.

She chuckled softly at the direction of her thoughts as she got up to go to the bathroom. She's slowly getting used to the idea of having Jennie around, especially in her head. And truthfully, the brunette is a pleasant thought to have.

The phone calls they had over the past days were ones Lisa looked forward to and most of the time it was her who calls her. She couldn't seem to stop herself from dialing her number which she already has on speed dial and hearing that sweet voice of hers to perk up her mood.

Their conversations were mostly casual greetings, asking what the other is doing, teasing or jokes here and there, sometimes subtle flirting but basically it was nothing significant. Yet Lisa likes it—whether it's for sexual reasons or not, she's not entirely sure.

Once she was done, Lisa grabbed a towel, wrapped it around her waist and went out of the bathroom deciding she would come by the studio to see Jennie. Maybe give her a break from work and take her out to lunch. They haven't had that official date yet as a couple. And no, that night at Seulgi's beach house doesn't count.

It's high time they go out in public as Ms. and Mrs. Manoban.

Feeling well energized by her plans, Lisa started toward the closet that was on the far left side of the bed to choose what to wear. She put on a black sports bra then was on the process of choosing her attire when midway through she stopped. Her brows furrowed and she tilted her head sideways listening intently at the strange sound coming from somewhere in her room.

She looked around, carefully inspecting her room. Nothing was

amiss. Everything was in its place from last night before she slept. With long strides, she went over her partially open bedroom door and peered outside. No one was there or along the hallways.

And there is that sound again getting more frequent and louder too. It's like forcing air through the nose or like the sound of water when blown with a straw. Annoyed and curious at the same time, Lisa listened acutely.

Realizing that the harsh noise is coming from under her bed, she tightened the towel around her waist, crouched on all fours and peeked, determined to stop whatever is causing the infuriating sound.

But as her eyes were beginning to focus on the dimness under the mattress, a round, pink, cold and wet thing poked out to touch her nose.

**"Fuck!"**

She jumped up immediately in fright and ran out of her room calling any servant that might be close by. She's sure it wasn't her mind playing tricks on her. There's no way in hell that she's dreaming again.

**"Did you see a ghost or something?"**

Jennie's familiar voice whipped Lisa's head in her direction. She is coming up the grand staircase in a red racerback shirt with pinstriped shorts, carrying a pack of cookies and looking amusingly at Lisa's flabbergasted expression.

Lisa ran a hand along her damp hair and shook her head still stunned by her discovery.

**"I think there's a pig under my bed!"**

She announced pointing with her free hand at the wide open door of her bedroom.

Jennie's eyes seem to enliven at what she said then she asked,

**"What does it look like?"**

**"What do you mean what does it look like?"**

Lisa said in an absurd tone. She was expecting her to be shocked but she is calmly standing in front of her undaunted by the news of a loose animal—a pig at that—in the house.

**"It's a pig, Nini! It's fucking ugly, smelly and fat and right now it's snorting under my bed!"**

**"Calm down, Lisa ..."**

**"You aren't even concerned there's a farm animal in our house?"**

**"Relax Lisa. It's just a harmless pig. That's probably Petunia or Toto,"**

she said not oblivious to the alarm in Lisa's face. She turned her back on her to call out,

**"Jorge!"**

Referring to the gardener that was running towards them from the opposite wing of the hall, carrying two short leash of red and black.

**"There's one under Lisa's bed!"**

Lisa's mouth hung open at Jennie's tranquil tone. She raised both hands placing it over her head like she was supporting her noggin from falling off.

**"There are two of them?! And they have names!"**

She said clearly freaked out by the information.

**"What the hell Nini? Are these—creatures your pets?"**

As Jorge accepted the bag of cookies from Jennie, which he would use to lure the animal out from under the bed and went inside the room to capture the pig, Jennie erupted in giggles finding Lisa's

reaction comical. The latter's eyes were wide with alarm and she would open and close her mouth like a fish out of water.

**"I'm sorry, Lisa—"**

Lisa cut her off to address her more pressing concern about the pigs.

**"I don't want them here, Nini. I'll buy you a dog—five dogs if you want—just get rid of these pigs."**

She was practically begging her to reconsider her choice of pets.

**"And this isn't funny!"**

Jennie leaned against the wall by the door and slid down to the carpeted hallway in a fit of laughter. She was laughing so hard that she barely noticed Lisa padding back into her room in a huff. Overcoming her laugh with an effort, Jennie pushed herself up and wiped the tears that welled from her eyes.

**"Lisa, I can explain ... they're not mine!"**

She called out to her husband holding in another wave of giggles before she walked inside the room.

Jorge had captured the snorting animal by then and he excused himself out to look for the other pig.

**"Well? I'm listening,"**

Lisa said as soon as Jennie came in.

She was slightly perched on a dark mahogany desk littered with stacks of papers and some books which served as a home office table and her arms were crossed over her chest. She had her clothes on already which Jennie was silently thankful for. She may find the incident funny but seeing her not five minutes ago with just a towel around her waist and with just a sports bra only, her hair wet and with droplets of water still on her honed body was definitely bothering her to a point of discomfort.

**"Those pigs are for the shoot, Lisa. The magazine wanted a**

**farm scene with real animals,"**

Jennie explained while she let her eyes roam the interior of her bedroom noting the spaciousness and the masculine colors of the walls and carpet.

**"I agreed to look after them as a favor to a friend. They're here only for two hours until the owner picks them up. I asked Jorge to take care of them for the time being."**

**"How did it end up under my bed?"**

She smiled sheepishly.

**"I might have neglected to check the leash and they sorta ran off."**

**"I see."**

**"I'm sorry, Lisa!"**

She wailed holding in another wave of mirth but it proved futile. She wrapped her arms around her middle and started laughing again.

**"You should have seen your face when you came out the hall. That look was priceless! Too bad I didn't have my camera with me."**

Lisa remained perched on the table just looking at her. The sound of her musical giggles lifting the corners of her mouth into a smile. She looked gorgeous standing there wallowing in hilarity with the sun streaming from the open window behind her, highlighting her features with a healthy glow. Even without a touch of make up except for the faint blush on her cheeks caused by laughing too much, she is naturally and utterly lovely.

Lisa stood up, moved away from the desk, dropped her arms and crossed toward the open door to lean a hand on the knob.

**"You are well aware that you're in my room, right?"**

She drawled meaningfully.

She held her hands up in front of her immediately aware of the mischievous flash in Lisa's eyes.

**"Yah. First time here. Nice room by the way but I think I better go . . . check on the pigs."**

**"Not so fast, Nini. Do you really think I would let this pig incident pass with you laughing at my expense?"**

Lisa couldn't help smirking at the way she instantly tempered her laughter and her body tensed when she pushed the door shut and locked it.

**"Lisa ... we talked about this and you agreed ..."**

**"Agreed to what exactly?"**

She took a step towards her.

Jennie took a step back, warily looking sideways and behind her for a chance to get away.

**"T-That we will get to know each other ..."**

Lisa took another purposeful step forward, enjoying her apprehension.

**"And we are. So you should know by now that I'm not very patient with certain things and I don't really appreciate being laughed at."**

**"I said I was sorry! You're overreacting!"**

She said, moving two steps back hoping to increase the distance between them before she could ease past her then out the door. But she overestimated her space from the bed. The backs of her knees hit the mattress on her second back step causing her to fall butt first on the dark blue bedspread.

It didn't take long for Lisa to stand directly in front of her.



**"And that was a bad move, Nini."**

A half smiled teased her lips as she quickly grabbed her arms and wrestled her down on the bed then without warning began tickling her sides.

Jennie's initial anxiety over the unmistakable sneakiness in her eyes was replaced by a loud shriek and the realization that Lisa was only teasing her.

**"Lisa! Stop! Have mercy!"**

She screeched, trying her best to wiggle free from under her weight and her mobile fingers that were connected to her sides.

Lisa paused as if considering her plea but kept her pinned on the bed.

**"Hmm ... not sincere enough."**

She said staring down at her with a wily smirk then moved her fingers again.

**"I'm sorry!"**

Jennie laughingly exclaimed twisting her upper body and pushing against her chest with one hand and the other grabbing a plump pillow to whack her with.

But it didn't deter Lisa one bit, in fact it made her double her efforts in tickling her. When she couldn't take it anymore, she bellowed,

**"Lisa! I'll do anything you want! Just stop please!"**

And Lisa did stop. But not because she apologized.

**"You mean that? You'll do anything I want?"**

**"Anything except that!"**

Jennie retorted slapping her shoulder. It doesn't take a genius to know the direction of her thoughts and taking into account their

position on the bed with her on top of her, faces so close and their legs tangled together from the struggle earlier, it was not surprising to have that line of thinking.

Now that Lisa stopped her assault on her sides, she couldn't rebuff the amazing feel of her weight on her. But Jennie strengthened her resolve to keep herself from grabbing the Thai woman's face and kissing those amazing lips of hers. Reminding herself that if she did that, especially with the convenience of the bed, it wouldn't end like that one time in the studio.

And right at this stage of their friendship, she doesn't want sex to ruin it.

Lisa must have sensed her thoughts as her piercing dark orbs gazed directly into her brown eyes but didn't remark on it, instead she muttered with an exaggerated sigh,

**"You're no fun."**

**"You get horny even when its pigs were talking about,"**

Jennie commented finding the thought funny again.

**"That's just gross, Lisa."**

Lisa smiled at her tactic to turn the subject back to the pigs to keep the sexual tones at bay. She shrugged carelessly.

**"Whatever you say, Nini. But you'll spend today with me."**

Lisa felt herself tensing and her pulse quicken when the brunette under her ran her tongue over her plump bottom lip then said,

**"Is that an order? You know I hate being ordered around."**

**"It's a demand,"**

Lisa stated complacently but deep down she was having trouble keeping her hands steady. The feel of her satin smooth skin beneath her fingertips was too good to pass up a chance for her to caress. But she welcomed the torture as long as she can keep her pinned on

her bed for a little bit longer.

**"And its non-negotiable considering the shock you put me through with that damn pig."**

She cackled at the mention of the pig, but Lisa could see that she was agreeable to her

*demand*

. "Fine. You win. I'll call the studio. I'm yours for today."

"Yeah . . . mine."



Instead of going out to eat, Lisa decided they have lunch in the house which came as a shock to every servant of the household who never thought they'd see a day when their master and mistress would be in each other's presence.

The household staff rushed to get the elegant dining area ready for the very first lunch that the couple will share. The table which can seat twenty-four people was wiped clean and polished twice. The floral arrangement at the center was replaced with fresh colorful blooms from the mansions own garden. Plates, utensils and wine glasses were carefully chosen and meticulously inspected by the head staff and set up adjacently on one side of the long table instead of on opposite ends as is customary. The staff was overjoyed and eager to make the couple's lunch a pleasant one.

But there was none more thrilled than the plump and kindly cook herself, Mrs. Song who has been employed by Lisa's grandfather when Alicia Manoban was five months pregnant with Lisa. She had always cooked for Lisa and had grown to care for her like she was her own daughter.

She was saddened by the way Lisa's marriage turned out and had given up hope in ever seeing it fixed. So when she was told that the two were having lunch in the house, Mrs. Song nearly fell off the kitchen stool in her excitement to be able to finally show off her cooking skills for Lisa and her wife.

She prepared an impressive feast that was meant to wow and satisfy the couple's taste buds. And hopefully make them realize that they should spend more time together than go out with other people who have nothing to do with their marriage.

From the appetizer of seared duck foie gras with date and lemon marmalade to the main course of salmon, parsley, porcini and potato fricassee and beef tenderloin, Jennie's eyes livened up and her lips formed a wide smile, obviously pleased by what was being laid out on the table.

Lisa chuckled at the notable dishes knowing that Mrs. Song outdid herself for this lunch. The food was worthy of first class restaurant menus.

**"Send my compliments to the cook,"**

she told one of the servants who eagerly smiled and nodded.

**"Medium bodied Pinot Noir for the salmon and Cabernet Sauvignon for the tenderloin. Excellent!"**

Jennie commented on the choice of wines that were chilling on the side.

**"Sauternes go well with foie gras. Do we have that?"**

**"We have it. How do you know so much about wines?"**

Lisa inquired amused by her knowledge of what wine is best suited for their meal.

She gave her a slight frown.

**"You forget that the orchard and tea farm you now own was my parent's favorite vacation place. I spent a lot of time there up until my teens. I have first-hand Wine and Tea 101 lessons and the chemistry that goes into making them always did interest me."**

**"Ah, typical nerd interests,"**

Lisa teased as she dismissed the servants from waiting on them. She doesn't want people listening to their conversation.

**"I thought you liked nerds."**

**"I do. I like your nerdiness the most."**

**"I'm afraid to ask why."**

Jennie rolled her eyes at the sexual undertones and sunk her teeth into a piece of salmon.

Lisa gave her a grin and offered a bite sized portion of beef stuck to her own fork.

**"Try it. It's good,"**

she said, keeping the fork near her lips to feed her the meat.

Jennie opened her mouth a little self-consciously and smiled at her while chewing the meat. She showed her a thumb up sign to say the beef is indeed tasty like what she said.

Swallowing, she cut a piece of salmon, forked it with a mushroom and offered the same to her.

**"You're turn. Open wide."**

Lisa burst out in laughter but allowed her to feed her as well.

**"Awesome fish."**

They carried on eating the delicious meal while engaging in friendly talk and good-natured banter. They were no longer consciously trying to get to know each other. It came naturally like friends would.

Lisa forgot the stress of the busy week she had. Jennie forgot that Petunia and Toto's two hour stay in the mansion had already lapsed an hour ago. Anyone who would have walked in on them would not have guessed that they hated each other when they were married or that they haven't consummated their marriage yet.

One look at them eating, offering food to the other, smiling and staring, unconsciously leaning their bodies toward the other and openly flirting would make one conclude they are indeed a newlywed couple.

Months before, Lisa never considered it possible for her to gain contentment from merely talking and playfully arguing with Jennie. But over the course of a few days, a lot has changed in their relationship and her preference. And she would be lying to say she didn't like it.

The only thing that didn't change is her sexual desire for her wife. She had to temper it in favor of getting to know her but it was still there. It refused to wane and probably with her constant presence in her head, it never will.

**"You know, ever since my mom died and my dad remarried, I made it a habit to eat alone or just eat out with Irene or with my staff at the studio,"**

Jennie suddenly blurted after a moment companionable silence.

**"This . . . is a first for me in a while."**

Lisa glanced at her, placed down the knife and fork and dabbed the napkin to her lips.

**"I regularly go to Thailand for gatherings with extended family members in attendance but this is actually the most enjoyable meal I've shared with someone."**

Jennie's gaze dropped to her unfinished dish.

**"Me too,"**

she admitted, her voice almost inaudible.

A ghost of a smile slid across Lisa's lips as she reached out for her glass of wine.

**"We should do this more often."**

Jennie looked back at her and nodded,

**"Yeah."**

**"Let's make a toast."**

**"To what?"**

Lisa grabbed her wine glass again while Jennie followed suit.

**"To a day of firsts,"**

she announced raising her glass.

**"You were in my room for the very first time, then you were on my bed—another first time—and this, our very first lunch together here in the house."**

Lisa could see the reasons she stated for the toast threw her a little off balance but Jennie showed her a bright smile and clinked her own glass to hers.

**"To a day of firsts,"**

Jennie repeated.

**"And for more firsts to come,"**

Lisa winked.

**"Don't push it, Manoban,"**

Jennie warned jokingly, smiling at her over the rim of the wine glass.

## [8] Flirty

Jennie knew the exact moment she came in the studio.

She felt her presence like a tangible force that is becoming more and more familiar to her as the days go by. It was weird but in the past five days that Lisa would come by the studio and Jennie had developed an awareness of her that she doesn't have with anyone else . . . not even with her best friend, Irene.

She wasn't accustomed to having this kind of heightened consciousness over someone and it amazes her that Lisa would have this effect on her senses even when she's fully concentrated on a shoot and had completely zoned out the rest of the people in the studio like she always does.

She could feel Lisa's eyes boring holes at the back of her head and she faintly heard some of her staff give her casual and familiar greetings evident of her constant appearance in the studio.

With a small smile, Jennie lifted up the camera and continued to order the model on the poses she wants done trying her best to ignore the invisible energy he was giving off that is making her loose focus.

**"Act like you sleep with that whip, Jin. It's all about the whip!"**

Snapping a shot as Jin gave a pose, Jennie thought how she hasn't been using her car of late as Lisa would always insist she drop her off at the studio in the morning before she goes to her own office and then later pick her up so that they can get home together in time for dinner.

**"I can always bring you to the studio, you know,"**

*Lisa had told her Saturday while they were having breakfast at the*



*gazebo in the middle of the garden.*

*She eyed her dubiously but thought it better to decline. "That's okay, Lisa. It isn't necessary."*

**"I insist,"**

*she said, reaching her arm across the round table to grab the brunette's hand and absentmindedly stroked her palm. "And besides, I'm feeling eco-friendly. You can help me with it."*

*Jennie's smile broadened and eventually burst out laughing. "How can I say no to an earth loving woman like you without feeling like a traitor to Mother Earth?!"*

**"You better say yes then."**

**"Okay. Yes! Anything to help with a noble cause."**

*Lisa smiled attractively and laced her hand to hers. "I knew you'd see it my way."*

It became some sort of routine . . . or a habit which Jennie has no complaints about. She rather enjoyed being with her husband. Even if at the back of her mind, a small voice is telling her that Lisa is taking gallantry and their friendship thing a bit too well because ultimately, she wants to fuck her . . . she wants her ready and willing when the time comes.

Not that she doesn't want Lisa too. Because God knows she does. It's just at the moment and with the uncertainty of their future, she doesn't want to loose herself in her and end up regretting her decision. But she still liked being with her.

**"Loose the shirt,"**

she told the model and kept herself from turning around to greet Lisa. She had to get her concentration back on the model and the shoot.

**"Work it, Jin."**

After the hectic schedules of the past weeks declined for both of them, they saw each other almost everyday and generally spent the better part of the evening in the mansion either watching a movie, playing one of the different kinds of games available in the house—video, basketball, board games, cards or whatever else they could think about—or basically talking about a specific topic related to work or about each other or just random stuff.

Flirting was a constant thing in all their time together. It's usually mild and harmless and as Irene would call it: Boring-High-School-Stuff. But nevertheless, these simple almost innocent touches make the butterflies in her stomach flutter crazily and in Jennie's inference, flirting is also one of the reasons their getting closer.

Last night had been different though. Flirting went a little out of hand and Jennie partially lays blame on learning how to play billiards which she never got around to actually playing.

**"It's a cue sport, Nini."**

*Lisa began explaining last night while they were waiting for dinner. They were at the game room and to pass the time she had asked Lisa to teach her how to play pool. "Meaning, it's played with a cue stick that's used to strike colored billiard balls, moving them around the baize covered table to the side pockets."*

**"What's with the numbers on the balls?"**

**"Gives the order of which you pocket. Usually the 8 and 9 numbered balls are last depending on what type of pool is played."**

*She played with the chalk, rubbing it on the tip of the cue stick repeatedly. "What are we playing now?"*

**"Neither,"**

*Lisa replied, moving to her side and positioning her hands and body to hold the stick properly and aim for a shot at the cue ball to break the rack. "You will have to learn how to hit the balls first."*

*She nodded, letting the Thai woman guide her on the proper body stance. Lisa went on with the pointers. "Spread your legs a bit wider. You have to be surefooted before you strike on the ball."*

**"Don't be too eager to hit."**

**"Make sure the cue ball is aligned with the target ball."**

*Lisa was bent over the billiards table just like her, except that her right leg is positioned in between hers. One hand was on her left arm and the other was at her waist. Her mouth was so close to her ear that every time she spoke, Jennie could feel her warm breath against her cheek and neck. It was making it hard for her to listen to whatever's she's saying.*

**"Relax Nini,"**

*Lisa admonished mildly while she stroked her arm to loosen the muscles for a better chance at hitting the ball right and she held her waist tighter, inadvertently chafing her thighs against her pants covered leg.*

*She tried her best to loosen up and ignore the arousing sensations Lisa was giving her with her innocent touches. "*

*She's not touching to seduce you."*

*She mentally reminded herself.*

*"She's teaching you the right way to play. Concentrate Jennie! Get your head on the game!"*

**"This looks easy but it's not,"**

*she said but she actually means it's hard to learn the game when you're this close to me.*

**"If you focus on what I'm saying, you'll breeze through this."**

**"I am focused!"**

*Lisa chortled. "No you're not. Your body is tense. I can feel it, Nini. "*

*Jennie tensed even more knowing that Lisa was aware of their closeness*

*and the effect it's having on her.*

**"Make a shot,"**

*the Thai woman urged softly.*

*Taking a huge breath to expel the anxiety from her body, Jennie carefully began sliding the stick with her right hand to aim for the white cue ball.*

**"Give it enough force so you break the rack,"**

*Lisa reminded still standing close and holding her. "Eye on the cue ball."*

*With the distraction Lisa was giving, Jennie followed her instructions as best she could and to her relief she managed to slightly forget where her hands are and the warm tingling feeling it was giving her body.*

*She gave the stick one last forceful shove and sent the cue ball rolling toward the triangle of colorful balls. The fifteen-ball rack broke and the balls scattered in all directions on the billiard table from the impact.*

*As she straightened and dislodged Lisa's hold on her, she saw three balls roll directly into three side pockets when the rack exploded and in her delight, she jumped and cheered. "I did it! I did it!"*

*Lisa's eyes lit up merrily at her childishness. "Well done to me!"*

**"To you?"**

*Jennie stopped jumping, faced the grinning Lisa and after replacing the cue stick on the table, placed a hand on her hips in a plucky manner. "I did the shot. Not you!"*

**"I taught you how to do it,"**

*Lisa insisted pompously. "And I had to tell you repeatedly to concentrate on the ball instead of minding my closeness to you."*

*She gasped and gave her the price she asked for her arrogant attitude, a quick slap to the chest. "You were doing it on purpose, weren't you?" She accused.*

**"Of course not. I would never!"**

*Lisa defended herself rubbing the part of her chest Jennie had slapped.*

**"You're a terrible liar."**

*Lisa dismissed it with a wave of hand but looked straight into her eyes and said, "I've spent a great deal of time imagining you pressed against me in more ways than one, Nini. You have no idea how you make me feel when you're close to me. It's good to know I have the same effect on you. But it's still not enough."*

*Jennie backed up slowly and reached behind her to steady herself against the billiard table. Her face was a mask of uncertainty, uneasiness and slight fear. She felt the same way. She was undoubtedly attracted to her husband but she's persistently denying it for the sake of self-preservation and their blooming friendship.*

*Yet, the fact remains that they're married and whatever attraction there is between them is very much justified by that legality alone. All this flirting would seem like Jennie is playing with fire when in truth she's keeping a reign on her impulses so that the Thai woman won't think she's an easy woman like all the others she was used to associating with.*

*This was it. The tension had been building ever since that night at Seulgi's beach house and they—she had been putting off broaching the matter in their conversations. She knew they had to talk about this situation eventually and it was likely happening now.*

*Jennie faced her squarely. "Lisa, please don't think I'm stringing you along because I'm not."*

**"Then what is it?"**

*Lisa asked stepping in front of her, bracing her hands on both sides of her hips and trapping Jennie between her body and the billiard table. "It's no damn secret we're attracted to each other so why control yourself."*

*Jennie swallowed, resting her hands on Lisa's inner elbows while looking deeply into the latter's eyes. "Because I don't want to be a casual lay Lisa," she admitted in a shaky voice.*

*Lisa's hands lifted and bracketed her jaw. Her eyes roved over her lovely face and said softly, "Who says you will be? You're my wife."*

**"Your wife for five years."**

*One hand touched her hair, smoothing it without a hint of force that Jennie couldn't help but close her eyes at the gentleness. "I won't force you into having sex with me, Nini."*

*She turned her face at the gentle caress of Lisa's palm on her cheek and lifted her eyes to her intense dark hazel ones. "Thank you."*

*Lisa continued to look into her eyes while her hands moved down to her hips, closing in on them and lifting her up to sit on the edge of the pool table causing a slight tremor on the forgotten billiard balls. "But I badly want to kiss you."*

*Her lips opened to say no, it was not a good idea, their feelings were out of control from flirting too much, they needed to get back to being plain friends. It was fun being friends, wasn't it? It was easier too.*

*But before Jennie could speak, Lisa had lowered her face and gently rubbed the tip of her nose against Jennie's. "Let me kiss you Nini," she murmured gruffly. "Don't think about anything else . . . just let me kiss you."*

*Maybe it was the heated tension in the air, the suggestive position they had on the billiard table, the unmistakable passion in her dark hazel eyes, her own need threatening to burst out of her skin or all of those reasons that made Jennie reconsider and capitulate.*

*With a sigh of acquiescence, she slanted her face and pressed her lips against Lisa's, sending her heart to quiver crazily in her chest. She slid her arms over her broad shoulders and rested them at the back of her neck drawing the latter close and moved her mouth indolently beneath hers, opening her lips to welcome her seeking tongue.*

*Lisa stood between her thighs. Her hands roved down the back of her backless paisley blouse, spreading her hands wide at the lowest part of her exposed back and drawing the legging clad junction between her legs against the long, hard ridge of flesh inside her pants telling Jennie more*

*than words how she was making Lisa feel.*

*Lisa undulated her hips, sinuously grinding against Jennie's while she kissed her with a wild thrusting tongue. It was as if she was pouring all her pent up desires for her into the kiss and Jennie was helpless to resist. In fact, Jennie was delighting in the feel of her lips, tongue and hips and she couldn't do anything but respond with an equal amount of passion.*

*As the kiss lingered, it grew more hot, wet, tormenting and seductive. Lisa's hands wandered to her blouse covered breast cupping it tenderly. Then she jerked her mouth off of hers to say in a voice gone low, "Nini, I swear—you drive me crazy." Her hands cupped the back of Jennie's head and pulled her hard against hers to continue the kiss.*

*The raspy admission and the demanding kiss made Jennie forget her reservations to their closeness and strained her body to fit her hardening contours. When the need to breathe became pressing, they buried their faces in each other's neck, clinging, inhaling each other's scent that they were already familiar with, running her hands over the thin material of her blouse and leggings and while Jennie's hand over the firm muscles of the Thai womans arms, shoulders and back.*

*No one interrupted them this time around . . . but as if thinking on the same wavelength, they gradually stopped kissing each other, breathing heavily and pressing their foreheads together with their eyes closed. Yet, they remained in each other's arms.*

*Three loud knocks on the door disturbed the air in the game room after a few minutes and slowly the door opened to reveal a servant who anxiously informed them that dinner was ready, obviously embarrassed to have walked in on the couple in a tight embrace and unmindful of their surroundings.*

*Reluctantly, as the servant hurried to get out of the room, Lisa loosened her embrace and gave Jennie one hard smack on the lips before jesting in a throaty tone, "I hope what I'm feeling right now is hunger pain."*

*Jennie giggled at her hapless expression and also gave her a smack on the lips.*

*Surprisingly, when they finally pulled away from the embrace and*

went to have dinner, the same camaraderie they had developed with each other was there. The awkwardness she was expecting didn't surface at any moment and she was immensely glad for it.

As she thinks about it, she realized that their kissing in the game room dispelled the looming tension and uneasiness she always has concerning Lisa. She still has her reluctance when it comes to the marriage since currently they were both still sticking with the terms of her father's will of a five year marriage and as far as she knows their legal arrangement will be up to that time only.

Jennie is not harboring any hope that it will extend to

*happily ever after*

because as far as she's concerned, love is not an emotion in play in their relationship.

But kisses are definitely a part of their friendliness now. Lisa kissed her goodnight last night when they went to their respective bedrooms and this morning, she was the one who kissed her when her husband dropped her off for work. And Lisa was very pleased when she initiated the sweet gesture.

**"Okay, that's a wrap! Great work, Jin!"**

Jennie finally said giving Jin a hi-five when he came down the bedroom prop set.

He lingered by her side as she was putting away the camera on the tripod and moving some of the equipment aside.

**"Always a pleasure to pose for a gorgeous photographer, Jen."**

Jin said playing the charming side of his fair good looks.

Lisa's eyes narrowed on the half-naked male model who was obviously flirting with an unsuspecting Jennie. She strode over to where they were and without a pause slipped her arms around Jennie's tiny waist to press her against hers and greet her with a languorous kiss effectively interrupting Jin's moves on her, showing to the male model that the woman he's flirting with is no longer



available.

Jennie smiled at her when she pulled back and shyly blushed knowing that everyone in the studio had witnessed the kiss, especially Jin who was gaping in astonishment at them. "

**Kim Seok-Jin, this is Lisa Manoban."**

She jumped to introductions to lessen the discomfiture.

**"My husband."**

Jin mouth dropped like an unscrewed part of a machine and Lisa had to smother a snort from escaping her lips for courtesy sake. She extended a hand at the poor guy.

**"Hey Jin. Nice meeting you."**

Like an automaton, Jin grabbed Lisa's hand for a brief handshake and promptly excused himself, mumbling something about getting changed and running late for an appointment somewhere.

**"Well . . . that was awkward,"**

Jennie declared when Jin was out of earshot then lifted her eyes back at Lisa.

Lisa sniggered looping an arm over her shoulders in a possessive gesture.

**"He's a grown guy. He'll live."**

She rested a hand on the arm that hung over her shoulder and gently tugged to get the Thai woman moving toward the direction of her office. Ignoring her rather mean comment about Jin, Jennie closed her office door and eyed Lisa carefully. She noted the weariness in her usually lively eyes as she slumped down on her comfy swivel chair behind her desk and her forehead has at least two creases in them.

**"Why do you look exhausted . . . and pissed?"**



indulging in Mrs. Song deliciously sweet profiteroles while Lisa was waiting for Jennie to begin teaching her about tea in between bites of dessert.

Lisa opened the book she had been reading for weeks now about the basic knowledge of tea and its production, scanning the pages for an appropriate answer to her query. Wines are interesting to learn since she drinks it on occasion but tea is an altogether difficult topic for Lisa to grasp. For one, she doesn't care for it like she does with wine, and two, she's not an avid tea drinker like her grandfather.

But with the construction of the new restaurant that conceptually will offer a variety of tea to its customers aside from wine and food, Lisa has to familiarize herself with everything about tea. That's the way she works. She has to know more than anybody in her own establishment or in the industry.

**"Lisa . . . I thought you read that book already."**

Jennie bobbed her head at the book in front of her.

**"I did. I just couldn't picture any of the stuff written here. I also browsed the net but my mind just refuses to focus on tea."**

Jennie wiped her lips with a napkin and leaned forward, arms crossed on the table.

**"Okay, just listen,"**

she said. "

**Tea is commonly defined as the brew made from the infusion of water and the leaves of an evergreen plant of the Camellia family. But in the tea industry, it is the dried processed leaves of Camellia sinensis or Thea sinensis."**

**"So to normal people, Tea is the drink. While to producers, it's the leaves."**

**"Exactly."**

**"It says here in the book that there are four major types of tea . . ."**

Lisa flipped the pages and showed her what she was talking about.

**"I really don't get the difference though. It wasn't explained here."**

**"White, Green, Oolong and Black tea all come from the same tea plant, Camellia sinensis. What distinguishes one from the others is the method used in processing the leaves,"**

Jennie explained not once regarding what is written on the book.

**"The way the leaves are processed—steamed, oxidized, dried or bruised—makes the difference."**

**"Shit, Nini!"**

Lisa exclaimed, tossing the book over her shoulders like useless scrap material.

**"I'm so stupid to have read that fucking book every night before I sleep for several weeks when I could have had you in bed with me talking about tea!"**

Jennie had to stifle her laughter at Lisa's aggravated expression and tried to say in what she hoped is a serious tone.

**"Goodness, here comes the bedroom talk again. Do you want to know about tea or not?"**

**"You make for a scary teacher,"**

Lisa retorted unabashed then popped the last piece of profiterole into her mouth.

**"Hey—"**

Jennie yelled as her hands reached out to grab the profiterole from her hand but Lisa was too quick. Jennie pouted at her chomping mouth and feigned anger for taking the last piece of sweet from her

plate.

Lisa chewed the profiterole with deliberate slowness and made sounds to indicate the tastiness of the dessert. Jennie erupted in giggles at the exaggerated way she was eating in an attempt to annoy her. But Lisa eventually laughed with her. She looked so girlish and playful and still very beautifully handsome that Jennie had to resist the urge to kiss her lips and taste the sweet food inside her mouth.

Mrs. Song came to them at that moment carrying a new batch of freshly baked chocolate chip cookies she had already placed in a jar. The delicious scent of the goodies filled the room and wafted their senses.

**"More dessert?"**

She offered, tipping the jar at them.

Without a second thought, Lisa dunked her hand in the jar grabbed one huge piece of cookie and immediately began eating it.

**"This is wonderful, Mrs. Song!"**

She complimented the beaming cook.

Jennie also took a piece for herself, smiling at the plump lady who never fails to cook them mouth-watering meals.

**"Mrs. Song, this is scrumptious! You are feeding us way too much. I'm getting fat already."**

**"Nonsense. A cookie once in a while won't damage the figure,"**

Mrs. Song dismissed the notion with a wave of a mitten covered hand.

**"You look just fine from where I'm standing. Doesn't she, Lisa?"**

**"Yes, she does, Mrs. Song. Yes she does,"**

Lisa agreed wholeheartedly her eyes slowly roaming over her wife's

face and upper body with a meaningful grin.

Satisfied by the reply, Mrs. Song added to Jennie,

**"You better believe your husband, dear. She's the one who sees you in your birthday suit and with the way she looks at you, she must like what she's seeing."**

Fighting to keep herself from laughing at Jennie's mortified reaction, Lisa told the cook,

**"Better give Nini another cookie, Mrs. Song. There are some areas I'd prefer to be . . . errr . . . fuller."**

Mrs. Song, clueless that she is, followed and quickly pulled another cookie out of the container placing it on the plate in front Jennie. Then, with a bright smile, she left them alone but not without leaving the jar of cookies on the table in case Jennie or Lisa would want more.

The dark brown orbs shot daggers at Lisa's roguish laugh. She was blushing in annoyance and looking at Lisa's snickering face added more to her chagrin. Jennie grabbed the first thing available to her and threw the cookie at her which Lisa easily evaded.

**"You perverted oaf! That was uncalled for!"**

She snapped.

Lisa leaned her elbows on the table, amusement curved her lips.

**"Oh come on, Nini! Where's your sense of humor? And besides we can't have Mrs. Song knowing we haven't done the deed—she'll tell my grandfather about it."**

**"This is the thanks I get for agreeing to teach you about tea,"**

Jennie grumbled swinging sideways on her chair to avoid Lisa's stare but the corners of her lips twitched.

**"Don't talk to me, I'm pouting."**

Before she knew it, there was a scraping of wood against the tiled floor and Lisa materialized in front of her. She reached out and ran the tip of her finger along the bridge of her nose making her nostrils wiggle.

**"I'll make it up to you, Nini."**

**"Just how are you gonna do that?"**

She challenged, grasping the finger that's distracting her nose.

**"It's your call. Whatever you decide. I won't object."**

**"Really?"**

Lisa nodded, pleasure floating over her at the sight of her dubious face. She's gorgeous as she is funny and enjoyable, and Lisa let her eyes wander over her lips, cheekbones and eyelashes.

Lisa would have leaned in to kiss her but then icy cold water suddenly came dripping from her head down to her shirt.

**"What the fuck—"**

She gasped in shock and immediately backed away. Realizing in seconds that as retribution, Jennie had just poured a glass of water over her head.

Smiling sweetly at her, her hair plastered to her skull and her shirt sticking to her skin, Jennie announced matter-of-factly.

**"I'm good now."**

**"Good to know,"**

Lisa muttered, shaking her head in disbelief.

Jennie snickered, unable to keep a straight face any longer then promptly yelped as Lisa yanked her arm and pressed the side of her face to her wet shirt.

**"No fair!"**

**"We're a bunch of kids!"**

Lisa said.

They dissolved in uncontrollable laughter, even as Lisa pulled Jennie out of the kitchen, past the indoor pool area and onto the staircase leading up the second floor rooms. Laughter had gradually faded once they reached the top of the steps and Lisa reluctantly let go of her hand so that she can go to the opposite direction of the hall where her room was.

**"Nini."**

Lisa stopped her, taking hold of her elbows.

**"I still need your help with tea especially about the processing. It sucks not knowing."**

Jennie smiled, stepped closer and tipped her toes to kiss her cheek.

**"I'll make you a flow chart and we'll continue the tea lesson tomorrow."**

Lisa's arms circled her waist and lightly pecked her lips.

**"You know what else sucks?"**

She spoke in a strangely quiet way. When Jennie shook her head, she avowed,

**"It's sleeping alone in my bed when across the hall another warm body that should be sleeping next to mine is alone on her bed as well."**

**"Lisa . . ."**

Jennie began but an unexpected noise from downstairs which sounded like car tires rolling on gravel, doors closing, bags being hauled out from a compartment and muted voices of about four people made them pull apart to investigate.

Peering curiously over the railing, Lisa waited for whoever arrived



in the late hour to come into view. She wasn't expecting any visitors and neither was Jennie.

**"Who is it?"**

Jennie asked craning her neck as she scanned the lower floor. Then the visitor suddenly appeared on the lowest step of the stairs freezing Jennie on the spot, her knuckles turned white as she gripped the railing hard and she shot an anguished glance at Lisa.

*This cannot be good.*

**"Grandpa?!"**

Lisa called out

**. "What brings you here this late?"**

**"I'm staying for a few days."**

*Shoot me now.*

## [9] Control - M!

Patrick Manoban is a seventy three year old nearly six feet tall man with thinning silver hair, a somber face that showed weathered lines appropriate for his age, light brown eyes that were alert despite the lateness of the hour and a surprisingly lean built clad in maroon tartan shirt and dark grey trousers.

A cane in one hand, he climbed the stairs at a turtle's pace, but he refused assistance from any of the servants offering to help him. He had a stubborn jaw set and his lips were stretched into a thin line evident of his impatience with the people tendering a helping hand.

**"I'm not incompetent!"**

He bellowed irritably, waving his cane at anyone who dared approach him.

**"If you people haven't been interrupting my ascent, I would have been up there already!"**

Jennie watched the old man progress slowly up the steps. She stood next to Lisa, gripping her arm like her balance depended on it. She was suddenly scared of Lisa's grandfather. She did not pay him mind during the wedding in Italy and even if she had wanted to, at that time she was a jumble of nerves whose main concern was to get over the sham of the ceremony. Every person's face was a blur to her during that occasion.

Besides, anyone who knew of the arranged marriage cannot really blame her for acting such six month ago. But as of this moment, she's very confused as to why Patrick Manoban is in the mansion. She lifted worried brown eyes at Lisa who seem unconcerned by how her grandfather is behaving. In fact, Lisa is smirking at the old man shouting expletives at the household staff who were unfortunate enough to think of proffering their aid to the man—which worried Jennie even more.

Confrontational, strict, mulish, irascible and wily are just a few of the adjectives that were crossing her mind as she looks at Lisa's grandfather ascending the stairs. She isn't good with grandfathers . . . or grandmothers for that matter as she never experienced having one all her life.

Scratch that! She's never good with any relative. She's never had to deal with family members since her own family from both sides isn't that prolific and at present, she's practically an orphan. She doesn't know what to expect from Lisa's grandfather or if she should be expecting anything at all.

Nobody taught her how to deal with a daunting old man who plays a big part in their arranged marriage. Will he give her a hard time while he stays in the mansion? Question her about their relationship? Will he dislike her? Will he dislike her so much that he'd be tempted to whack her with that cane of his? She hopes not.

Normally the opinion of others doesn't matter to her. But in this case, it is necessary for Patrick Manoban to have a good impression of her for the simple reason that he knows Chaerin and probably communicates with her once in a while. And this early in the arrangement, she does not want Chaerin finding a loophole to take right in claiming her inheritance.

Lisa afforded a glance at Jennie when her grasp on her arm became a little painful and she noticed that she looked several shades paler. Lisa gave her her best impression of a comforting smile and unwound her arm from her hold, lacing their fingers instead.

**"What's he doing here?"**

Jennie asked in a small voice.

**"There's a shareholder's meeting tomorrow. I'm sorry I completely forgot about that,"**

Lisa apologized.

She understood the apprehension in Jennie's eyes. Her grandfather's stay means one of many things and one of those things is . . . she

will have to move in her room for the time being. While Lisa did promise that she will not force Jennie into doing anything with her, the other—more intolerant and less gentlemanly—side of her is rejoicing at the idea of her sleeping on her bed right next to her this very night.

Mentally, Lisa considered thanking her grandfather for this unscheduled visit but realized she cannot let the old man know that her marriage to Jennie isn't really what would qualify as an actual marriage yet.

For one, Patrick Manoban had been firm about her marrying Jennie saying that she's her match—although when asked why he would think a complete stranger is a match for her, he replied with,

**"It's for me to know and for you to find out. And finding out, will be the fun part for you."**

—she was utterly confused when her grandfather had said that but hadn't prodded the old man since at that time, she was so incensed by the idea of marrying an unfamiliar person.

Secondly, her grandfather and her parents had no less than threatened her before the wedding that she should treat Jennie well or else they would relinquish from her the management of the wine and tea farm and most of the establishments she currently runs. It was no idle threat too. She saw how serious their faces were and that alone convinced her they mean business.

So if by any chance her grandfather learns that it was only recently she and Jennie got better acquainted, that threat might be carried out without a second thought. And Lisa doesn't want that happening.

Setting aside her earlier joy about their sleeping arrangements, Lisa squeezed Jennie's hand to draw her attention. She raised scared eyes to her which she felt bad for but could do little about.

**"If anything, my grandpa is very perceptive,"**

Lisa told agitated brunette but it sounded more like a caution.

**"Try to stay calm,"**

she murmured to an extremely bothered Jennie who reluctantly nodded and gripped her hand tight.

**"Don't worry . . . we'll do this together."**

**"That's not what I'm worried about,"**

Jennie confessed softly.

**"What then? Because I'm worried about convincing him we already know each other well after all this time since the wedding. He will ask questions, Nini."**

**"We know each other, Lisa. We're friends now, aren't we? Convincing him will be easy,"**

Jennie answered then she bit her lip and unconsciously began rubbing Lisa's arm with her free hand.

**"I'm worried that he won't like me."**

She sounded so despondent at the thought that Lisa was momentarily stunned by the knowledge that she sells herself short to other people.

**"Why would you think that?"**

she asked.

**"Because I've never had a grandfather before."**

Jennie was about to elaborate further seeing Lisa's speechlessness, but Patrick Manoban had already—finally—reached the top step of the stairs where they were waiting and Jennie's entire body at once felt like it's been rooted to the spot.

**"Grandpa! I missed you!"**

Lisa greeted jovially leaving Jennie's side to engulf the old man in a bear hug.

**"You should have told me earlier you'd be here. I would have picked you up at the airport."**

**"I'm here now. Don't go rewinding the hours,"**

Patrick admonished mildly but there was a pleasant aura in his face while he talked to Lisa.

**"I wanted to surprise you two."**

**"You certainly did, Grandpa."**

When Patrick moved his gaze to Jennie, it was her cue to greet the old man. Should she offer a handshake? Hug him like Lisa did? Or just simply greet him with words? She doesn't know which one is appropriate or allowed without coming on too familiar or too touchy.

She shot Lisa a fleeting glance and saw those deep dark hazel eyes were encouraging her to make a move. With an under breath, she took a step toward Patrick still debating on how to greet him but before she could lift her hand the old man thrust the cane at Lisa for her to hold and he spread his arms wide at Jennie then immediately closed up around her in a hug.

**"Jennie,"**

he acknowledged in the most affectionate tone she hadn't expected to hear from him.

**"It is so good to see you again."**

Taken by surprise at the warm gesture, Jennie found herself smiling in relief and she hugged Patrick back in joy.

**"Same here, Mr. Manoban. It's good to see you too. How have you been?"**

He released her but kept an arm on her shoulders.

**"I'm always good. Call me Grandpa. We're family now. Mr. Manoban sounds so formal and old."**

**"Grandpa you are old,"**

Lisa interjected, handing back his cane.

**"I'm sorely tempted to knock you down with this cane, Lisa. That is if you don't mind, Jennie."**

Jennie giggled, the initial trepidation about this meeting falling away from her mind.

**"Oh I don't mind at all Mr. Mano—I mean, Grandpa—go right ahead."**

A low rumble in Patrick's belly went off as a laugh which put Jennie at ease even more and he gently patted her shoulder, but his next question was contradictory to the smiling expression on his face.

**"Has Lisa been treating you right?"**

**"Y—yes,"**

she replied rather tentatively and a little surprised by the query. Looking directly at Lisa's now apprehensive face, she gave her an impish smile then added,

**"She's very . . . nice and companionable. I enjoy spending my time with her."**

Hoping her admission wasn't just for her grandfather's benefit, Lisa insisted,

**"I am treating her right, Grandpa."**

And to reinforce her claim, she pulled Jennie away from Patrick's side drawing her close to her to give her a peck on the lips.

But Patrick isn't easily swayed by this display of affection. He frowned at Lisa and shook his head in disapproval

**. "You are thinking with your testosterone again,"**

he grumbled, banging the cane once on the floor to emphasize his

censure.

**"And why the hell is your shirt wet at this time of the night?"**

Jennie gasped but did her best to suppress her mirth by burying her face against Lisa's damp shirt while Lisa blushed and distractedly began rubbing her nape with her free hand.

**"Grandpa!"**

She scolded but it lacked conviction.

**"It's her fault!"**

Lisa accused, looking at the giggling Jennie.

In between giggles, Jennie objected in her defense.

**"You started it!"**

The old man ignored Lisa. But with an endearing smile, he addressed Jennie instead.

**"If you find out Lisa has another woman besides you, tell me and I will ship her off to military school."**

**"God, Grandpa! Did you just come here to lecture me on good manners and right conduct?"**

Lisa complained a bit irritably. When Jennie giggled again and nodded at her grandfather, she groaned,

**"You two are ganging up on me! This cannot be good."**

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An hour later, after several questions about their relationship, Jennie's profession, future plans and even about motherhood—which had Jennie stuttering a response, Lisa thanked the high heavens because her grandfather had finally decided to retire for the night in one of the guest rooms.

And Jennie, after sneaking quietly in the hallway to keep Patrick



from noticing she's gathering things from her room and after taking longer than usual to get ready for bed, is now inside Lisa's room uneasily fidgeting as she persisted on hanging by the settee furthest from the bed.

She wore a beige v-neck tank top and black cotton shorts that looked so good on her giving Lisa's thoughts a flash of gleaming brunette hair draped over her pillow and her naked body writhing in ecstasy under hers.

Lisa shook the erotic thought aside as she continued to stare at Jennie while she was perched on the leather chair by her desk. Biting back a smile at her wife's obvious discomfort at being in her room, Lisa wondered what could be going on inside her head right now.

Jennie has been thinking of ways to avoid sleeping in Lisa's room tonight but that concern was outweighed earlier by the idea of giving a good impression to her grandfather. It was when Patrick announced he was tired and needed to retire that the import of her situation went tumbling down her wits to the point of nervousness. There was no escaping the sleeping arrangement now.

To make her edginess worst, Lisa's heavy-lidded hazel eyes is deliberately making a leisurely appraisal of her body that made her squirm in the settee and self-consciously reach for a square pillow to cover her upper legs.

*Is she thinking of honeymooning tonight?!*

When she couldn't take the Thai woman's stares anymore, she retorted,

**"Will you stop staring at me."**

**"I'm admiring you."**

**"Thank you but please don't do it now. It's bothering me."**

Lisa chuckled, enjoying how her wife is trying to keep on a cool façade despite her inner distress.

**"On the contrary, Nini, you bother me right now. And I think you know why."**

Jennie closed her eyes for a moment and took a deep breath. She won't deny that the idea of having sex with Lisa makes her whole-body tremble and legally they are expected to have sex but she just couldn't shake the fact that all of this is temporary.

*For five years only*

. Their marriage is beneficial to both of them within that period alone. Beyond that . . . she doesn't know. Lisa's not giving any vibe that she wants this marriage to stay longer than five years. She only wants to claim her rights in bed as her husband which, for her, is not a good enough reason. And her grandfather's appearance tonight certainly did not change that.

**"Are you a virgin, Nini?"**

Her eyes flew open in incredulity.

*Where did the question pop out from?*

Surely, she must have heard wrong . . . or not.

**"What?!"**

**"You heard me."**

**"Yes, I heard you!"**

She snapped heatedly, averting her gaze at the dirty blonde haired woman.

Lisa watched her struggle to appear blasé. Her scandalized eyes told her what the answer is but she wanted to hear it from her.

**"So are you?"**

She persisted stubbornly.

A flash of annoyance crossed Jennie's features then her eyes lifted,

unabashed.

**"Yes!"**

The brunette shot back.

**"There! I said it. Happy now?"**

**"Yes. Very happy,"**

Lisa drawled, her lips smiled lopsidedly. Then in one fluid move, she sprang out of her seat, striding over to the brunette and gathering the latter in her arms like a groom carrying a bride to their honeymoon suite.

Jennie wiggled from her hold demanding she put her down as she walked them to the bed. Lisa ignored her protests and gently placed her in the center of the mattress then pinning her with her body.

**"Lisa . . . what does it matter if I'm a virgin or not? I—I'm not ready for what you want. Stop grinning at me like that! I'm embarrassed enough as it is,"**

Jennie pointedly said. She can feel her cheeks heating from embarrassment.

**"There's no reason for you to be embarrassed, Nini."**

**"Then why do you look like you're finding my being a virgin funny."**

Lisa pressed her forehead against hers and kissed her lightly on the lips. It doesn't matter if she's not ready to have sex with her now. She's willing to wait for her to be ready. Because Lisa knows it will be worth it when the time comes. A deeper part of her is just inexplicably happy to know this bit of information about her. Because her wife's shy admission stirred some buried feelings in her . . . emotions she refused to think of because of Niki's betrayal.

**"Nini, I'm amazed."**

**"By what?"**

**"By how you managed to stay a virgin all these years looking like this . . . so gorgeous and hot,"**

Lisa praised as her lips peppered feathery kisses all over her face; starting at her forehead, the lids of her eyes, the tip of her nose, her flushed cheeks and the outline of her jaw but at the same time meticulously avoided her lips.

Despite her irritation a second ago over the subject of her virginity, Jennie sighed at the pleasure Lisa's lips is evoking from her body. Her eyes remained closed and her hands found its way to her husband's nape and back moving in a caress that urged the latter to continue the gentle but pleasurable actions.

**"And my grandfather is officially smitten with you, Nini."**

Lisa's lips trailed down her neck, exploring the smooth column as her hands ran along her sides and thighs at a slow, torturous pace.

**"It doesn't happen very often but you managed to impress him especially when you agreed that iguanas make good pets."**

**"Your grandfather is very nice, Lisa. I like him,"**

Jennie breathed, turning her head slightly to give the Thai woman better access to her neck.

**"But I hope he's not serious about the iguana. A lizard with a serrated fringe running along its back from head to tail isn't exactly my idea of a pet."**

Lisa chuckled but didn't stop her hot kisses.

**"Thank you for giving allowances for his age."**

**"Yes."**

Was all Jennie could say but she isn't sure what she's saying yes to anymore. The feel of Lisa's lips effectively made her forget the reasons for her uncertainty and reservations at being in her room, on her bed . . . about being intimate.

Just when Jennie thought the feel of her lips couldn't get anymore enjoyable, Lisa began nipping on a particular spot on her neck that made her moan out loud as a shudder of pleasure made her skin prickle.

Vaguely aware that her husband is marking her and unconcerned that tomorrow she'll probably have a hickey the size of Australia, Jennie's arms tightened more firmly around the Thai woman. She reveled in how good it felt to be caressed by Lisa.

**"I want you so bad, Nini."**

Lisa whispered huskily when she let up on her neck and her lips were hovering closely over Jennie's own.

**"But I know you still have reservations about us having sex so I'll wait . . . just don't take too long . . . this is killing me."**

Jennie might have been drowning in the intense hazel pools of Lisa's eyes but her heart soared at her words. And even if the Thai woman didn't say it, Jennie knows she cares enough for her since she respects her decision no matter how hard it is for her.

**"Are you testing the limits of your control, Lisa? We shouldn't be making out . . ."**

**"My control has been tested for three and a half months now, Nini."**

Jennie's hands trembled as she lifted them up to cradle her husband's beautiful-handsome face, as if she suddenly seeing the Thai woman in a new light.

**"Seulgi was telling the truth then . . . you have been faithful."**

Her voice became unsteady and her pulse went pounding.

**"Please kiss me, Lisa."**

A long, blank pause ensued while Lisa eyed her thoughtfully.

**"Promise me one thing . . . from now on you sleep here in my**

**room, regardless of whether or not my grandfather is here or whoever else suddenly decides to come."**

Jennie stared at her with a searching look in her brown orbs. Her mind ran a frenzied mental assessment of the complications that could arise from Lisa's proposal but she admitted to herself even if she's being held back by her personal issues right now, eventually when she gets past that hurdle, she will want Lisa to be her first.

**"I promise."**

Lisa released the breath she held captive while she was thinking of an answer before her lips slowly dropped to the inviting fullness of her wife's lips. There were no more words spoken after that.

The Thai woman's lips and tongue began its gentle exploration of Jennie's mouth as the former's rough hands sought her breasts under the cotton tank. Lisa's fingers reacquainted themselves with her pebbled nipples, kneading her breast at the same time.

Jennie sighed into the kiss matching the demands of Lisa's assaulting mouth and hardly realized that her own hands had slipped inside the latter's shirt and began running along her muscled back moving toward the base of her spine.

Lisa groaned harshly and tore her mouth away from Jennie's to pull off her wife's tank top. Her mouth quickly found her breasts flicking them with her tongue then lapping hard on each soft globe, sending pleasure coursing through Jennie's veins.

But it didn't end there. Lisa's mouth traveled further down to her flat stomach, licking the golden skin that Jennie could do little but arch her body up to her expert lips and thread her fingers through her soft hair.

Suddenly, Lisa sat up and before Jennie could question her, the Thai woman lugged her arms up and forward so that they were now both sitting on the bed, Jennie facing her at eye level while straddling her lap.

**"Take off my shirt,"**

Lisa ordered quietly, her thumbs stroking the curve of her hips.

When Jennie did as bidden, Lisa put pressure on her back to push her breast against her bare chest loving the feel of skin on skin before her gruff voice beside her ear said,

**"You can kiss me, if you want to. You can stop, if you want to. You decide how far do you want to go, Nini. You have full control of how far you want us to go."**

Jennie could feel the growing bulge between Lisa's legs as it rubbed languidly against her wet center—it is a definite distraction. But she gazed at the sensual mouth inches from hers and in silence studied Lisa's face as if searching for an unspoken promise.

*She's giving her control.*

Slowly, her lips moved closer to hers and her heart began to race.

The moment their lips connected again, Lisa's mouth opened on hers in a hard, hungry kiss. Her fingers buried into her dark luscious hair, holding her wife's mouth locked to hers while the latter's arms pulled her by the shoulders. And like their previous kisses, it became hot, intense, demanding, arousing . . . they can't get enough of each other's lips and taste. Hot touches became urgent, soft moans fell out from their mouths whenever their lips detach a fraction from each other...

Then there was a loud rap on the door, followed by Patrick's voice saying,

**"Lisa, I need your research on tea. Might as well read it tonight. Damn jetlag—couldn't sleep."**

They abruptly stopped then tensed, wide eyed gazes flying toward the closed door trying to remember if it was locked. The sexual tension in the air slowly dissipated and for Jennie it was replaced by hilarity while Lisa was obviously infuriated.

**"Urgh! Dammit!"**

Lisa cursed under her breath resting her forehead on Jennie's bare

shoulders that were slightly shaking from her giggles.

**"I'm tempted to send him packing to a nearby hotel. His timing is like a fucking cold shower."**

**"Where is your heart?! That's your grandfather out there,"**

Jennie scolded in a mock serious tone then quietly giggled again.

**"Yeah right. Apparently, he's your ally now."**

Lisa playfully rolled her eyes.

**"You said I'm in control."**

**"Tell me,"**

Lisa mused, eyeing Jennie intently.

**"If Grandpa didn't knock, would you have stopped?"**

Jennie bit her lip, blushed and lowered her gaze, realizing that the discerning Patrick Manoban had unwittingly saved her from losing control.

**"Didn't think so,"**

Lisa mumbled.

**"Lisa!"**

Patrick rapped on the door once more, his tone impatient.

**"I know you're both still awake."**

**"Alright! I'm coming right out!"**

Lisa shouted back and reluctantly untangled herself from Jennie to get off the bed. She ran a hand through her messy dirty blonde hair and irately watched Jennie slip on her tank top before stretching out on one side of the bed silently laughing.

**"Shit! I don't have the damn research he wants,"**



Lisa hissed, remembering that she only had the book on tea not her own research and the book was left in the kitchen when she tossed it.

**"Fuck!"**

**"Well,"**

Jennie sat up and smiled.

**"It looks like I have to make that tea processing flow chart now. I need to use your computer. Why don't you go out and stall Grandpa a little bit while I make you your research on tea."**

**"Did I mention I hate tea?"**

**"At some point . . . yes."**

Jennie giggled.

**"Well, I hate it,"**

Lisa snorted.

Amusedly, Jennie pushed herself off the bed, handed Lisa her sports bra and shirt. She quipped,

**"Tell Grandpa, I said thanks."**

Then she strode toward the computer table leaving Lisa to shake her head in pure annoyance.

**Thoughts for this chapter? ^^**

## [10] Sneaky

The thick draperies in Lisa's room were left last night gathered into three equal sections by gold curtain straps. When morning came and with it sunlight, the rays filtered through the huge glass windows casting light into the silent room where two people were still sleeping.

Half covered by the blue gray blanket that matched the bedspread, they were side by side facing each other, and judging from the proximity of their position, it would appear like their sleeping heads rested on one pillow only and most likely inhaling each others exhaled breath.

Jennie's arm was splayed over Lisa's chest, rising and falling to the latter's steady breathing, while Lisa's left arm lingered at her waist and the other was used as her pillow. It wasn't the most comfortable position especially for Lisa, seeing as they occupied probably a quarter of the bed but their faces looked surprisingly relaxed and content.

In the stillness of the room, a figure blocked the light from the window causing a shadow to loom at the foot of the bed. His silvery white brows curled as he observed the sleeping couple with skeptic eyes.

Last night when he arrived, he did not expect to find them awake and loitering in the hallway. He had intended to surprise them the next day—today of his presence and see first hand what the servants have been telling him about Lisa and Jennie living separately in the mansion.

It was no shocker when he learned that the two had a rift since moving in the mansion. Of course they have that gap. They're strangers thrust into each others presence. They hated each other the moment they clapped eyes. It was expected. The arranged marriage was not some dumb ass fairytale. Anyone who believed it

was, is the dumb ass. It was a complicated matter and it still is.

But as it turned out—when he came up the steps and saw them with their hands threaded together, their bodies leaning toward each other, whispering and affording glances that can only be described as tender and affectionate—he was the one surprised.

Carefully observing them last night, he was led to believe that they had grown fond of each other as evidenced by some sort of invisible connection he cannot really explain with words and there was an air of easy closeness between them that only couples with long standing relationships should have . . . and they are not in that category obviously.

He should be happy and satisfied that despite the forced marriage Lisa and Jennie seems to be getting along. And he is—or he will be when the doubt in his mind has been placated. Maybe it's his aging mind, his tenacity or years of experience to back his reasoning but he's sure something is not adding up.

If what the servants are claiming is true—which he's more inclined to believe since most of the household staff are under his employ and have been loyal to him for several years now—he's finding the drastic changes that happened between the two hard to consider.

At this point, it would have been more credible to him if they just admitted to being friends. Any awkwardness is justified. Because at least he knows they are working on fixing the huge gap between them when they were forced into the marriage. Friendship is an acceptable start in their case.

But no, they were cuddly, flirty . . . intimate last night. They were practically flaunting it before his eyes. And that made him conclude they were pretending—convincingly at that—for his sake. Or they are both horny young adults enjoying the excitement of constant sex in the context of marriage.

He's more likely to believe the former and besides from his observation last night, even though it looked like Jennie

*enjoys*

her time with Lisa and allows such intimacies between them, there are moments . . . although quickly covered up . . . where she's tense and is a little reserved.

And that worried him.

From the start, he liked Jennie. But he also came to admire her strength and quiet confidence when he learned of what she's been through with her mother's unexpected death followed by the fissure with her father when he took a new wife then his death.

It was that rare quality she possessed amidst an emotional turmoil that convinced him she'll make an excellent wife for Lisa, his only granddaughter, who once loved with all her heart only to have it broken and since then treated women like cheap trinkets . . . easily bought, disposable and replaceable.

More than the business benefits, they actually compliment each other on a personal level. It may take some time for them to realize it and it's probably too much to hope for considering the circumstances of their marriage but Patrick wanted to take his chances on the two of them.

In the space of a few minutes as he continued to stare at the figures on the bed, Patrick made a decision and slowly went over to Lisa's side and nudged her awake.

**"Lisa. Wake up."**

Still half asleep, Lisa groaned at the slight shaking of her body and unconsciously snuggled closer to the warmth next to her. The fogginess of her brain was a result of sleeping in the wee hours of the morning talking about tea to an inconsiderate old man.

**"Lisa."**

Patrick called louder this time and continued to shake Lisa's arm.

Slowly, sleepy hazel eyes fluttered open adjusting to the glaring light from the windows. Lisa rubbed her eyes and began focusing them on the dark figure beside the bed that disturbed her peaceful slumber.

When her vision became clear, Lisa jerked up in shock upon seeing her grandfather hovering over her. Her sudden actions dislodged her arm under Jennie's head causing the brunette to rouse from her deep sleep as well.

**"Grandpa!"**

Lisa groaned in irritation plopping back down on the mattress, the last remnants of sleepiness fading away from her brain.

**"Privacy, Grandpa! Ever heard of it?!"**

**"If you wanted privacy, you should have locked your door."**

The mulish old man reasoned.

**"Locked or not, you don't just come inside somebody else's room! It's wrong."**

**"It's getting late. You're attending the shareholder's meeting."**

Patrick said, unconcerned of Lisa's outburst and unapologetic of intruding into their privacy.

**"Me?! You flew here to attend that meeting."**

Patrick shuffled slowly around the bed, already making his way to the door.

**"I just appointed you my proxy. Now go get ready. The meeting is in one and half hours."**

He sounded like he issued an edict, leaving Lisa no choice but to follow.

**"What?! Where will you be?"**

Lisa recognized the steadfastness in her grandfather's tone which only meant he will not listen to any objections, valid or not.

**"Here. Where else? Call me when it's over."**

Disoriented from being jolted awake, Jennie shifted her body and

tried her best to clear the drowsiness from her mind. She stayed up till morning typing away in Lisa's computer about everything related to Tea. Her body and her eyelids were like dead weights, but she was hearing indiscernible voices and the bed was getting a bit bouncy from someone's movement.

**"What's going on?"**

She mumbled, stretching her arms and legs.

**"Just fucking great!"**

Lisa snorted angrily as Patrick exited the room and as if belatedly finding his sense of consideration, closed the door behind him.

Confusion was etched on Jennie's sleepy face when she finally managed to open her eyes seeing Lisa with an arm slung over her forehead and her lips stretched into a thin line.

**"Was someone here? I heard another voice."**

**"The annoying Patrick Manoban was just here to ruin a peaceful morning,"**

Lisa grumbled, flinging her arm off and turning on her side to face Jennie.

Jennie's eyes grew wide upon hearing about Patrick being in the room. Quickly scanning the premises, she unconsciously drew the blanket up to her chin, all kinds of crazy thoughts running in her head.

**"What? Oh my God! What'd he want?"**

Her harried reaction vanished some of Lisa's annoyance and the corners of her mouth lifted into a lazy smile.

**"He appointed me proxy for the shareholder's meeting. Totally spur of the moment decision, by the way, and I only have an hour."**

**"Why are you smiling when you obviously don't want to go?"**

**You were just frowning a second ago,"**

Jennie said with skepticism having relaxed considerably when she didn't see Patrick inside the room.

**"Are you always bipolar in the morning? Because if you are . . ."**

Lisa chuckled pulling the blanket from her grip then her lean arms closed around her and flipped her under her weight.

**"What are you gonna do about it?"**

**"I might reconsider my decision of sleeping here."**

**"Like hell you will!"**

Lisa retorted with a smile and kissed the tip of her nose. Her piercing hazel eyes ran over the brunette's face, lips and her messed up hair before meeting her brown eyes.

Jennie looked even more beautiful in the morning. Lisa could get used to waking up like this.

**"What do you say about sharing our first good morning kiss?"**

She said in a husky tone.

Jennie's face took on a serious look as if taking time to consider the Thai woman's suggestion then she placed her palms in a tender caress along her cheeks and studied her face, beginning with her tousled dirty blonde hair down to her perfectly shaped plump lips . . . brushing the soft skin gently.

Then in a teasing note, she quipped,

**"What's in it for me?"**

Smirking, Lisa shot back smartly,

**"Only one way to find out . . ."**

*Why does it feel right waking up like this?*

**"That's a good idea."**

Lisa could no longer help herself. Her charming face, the teasing words and Jennie's touch did disturbing things to her body and with a groan, her lips descended on hers with tender passion.

Eyes closing, the brunette's mouth opened to receive her kiss, loosing herself within seconds in the zealous feeling only her husband can stir up from her. Lisa's arms tightened more firmly, slipping inside the waistband of her shorts to rest on her lace covered bottom and spanning her palms to lift up her hips to meet the hardened ridge between her thighs.

Lisa rocked against her once or twice in a suggestive movement that made Jennie vibrantly aware of her arousal.

Once she molded her body against the Thai woman, the kiss went from sweetly coaxing to seductively electrifying in a snap. Lisa's tongue plunged into her mouth, probing with expert thoroughness and demanding her participation while the wide palms on her buttocks asserted themselves in an eager caress.

But as Lisa wet the soft skin on her neck with the tip of her tongue, slipped a hand over her right breast under the soft fabric of her shirt and the other moved from her butt to stroke her covered but sensitive front, fingers tracing the edge of her lace underwear seeking the moist flesh, she swallowed thickly then said,

**"Lisa . . . I hate to say this . . . but we have to stop."**

Lisa's chestnut head popped up from its place in the crook of her neck to look down at her with smoldering eyes but her hand stilled its caress.

**"Stop?"**

Clearing her drugged mind, Jennie swallowed again before clarifying.

**"You are going to be late if we keep this up. Grandpa might—"**

**"Lisa! Time is ticking!"**



Patrick's voice boomed through the closed door followed by one loud knock.

**"Don't even think about being late."**

Jennie quirked an amused brow at Lisa's thoroughly disgusted face.

**"See? Right on cue."**

Heaving a frustrated sigh, Lisa gave Jennie one last kiss before grudgingly withdrawing her hands from the insides of the latter's clothes then she pushed herself off the bed.

Jennie rolled over on her belly once her weight was gone, hugged a pillow beneath one cheek and peered up at her gawkily walking towards the bathroom.

Even as she smiled and teased and responded to Lisa's wonderful assault on her senses, the thought of nights and mornings to come when Patrick would no longer be a nuisance to Lisa or a plausible excuse for her to stop their make outs is something she's been thinking of . . . but in a good way.

She had always believed Lisa's motive on their relationship was mostly for sexual reasons but last night when she said she'd wait for her—words she never expected or hoped to hear from the Thai woman—logic flew out the door and her heart warmed like never before.

And after learning that she has abstained for more than three months because of her, she had to admit her resolve regarding sex began to gradually change. Maybe she shouldn't torture herself into thinking too much of their situation. Maybe she's ready . . .

Maybe tomorrow will take care of itself. It always does.

When Lisa came out of the bathroom a while later, relieved, bathed and refreshed from her lack of sleep, she found Jennie back asleep, hugging a pillow where her body laid earlier.

Her feet carried her over to the bed and she sat next to the brunette's sleeping frame, admiring the lovely face illuminated by



## *touring*

inside the mansion, except her room, and engaging in small pointless sometimes funny talks, they were now in the well tended garden that made up most of the back area of the property still having that walk he suggested.

Coming out of Lisa's room earlier, she was greeted by a smiling Patrick when she was about to head to her own room. He was standing in the hallway exactly on the middle point where the two wings of the mansion met that there was no way Jennie could have missed or avoided him. She doesn't know how long he must have been standing there supported only by his trusty cane but she had a funny feeling he was waiting for her with good reason.

Her prior concern about covering up the hickey Lisa gave her last night was quickly forgotten. He wants to talk to her. That she knew for sure. The walking is merely a tool to lighten the mood or probably a way to ease into a more serious conversation without coming on too intimidating. Whatever it was, she knew Patrick will make it known when he decides to.

In the meantime, while following along Patrick's slow steps, she let her eyes rove the three acre garden at the back of the mansion which was designed with spectacular architecture that would please anyone's eyes.

Artfully planted rows of multi colored flowers lined the concrete walk all over the garden as well as lush greenery, cherry trees and yews and other attractive plants available on earth. Every shrub was incredibly well kept that one would think the gardener also works as a beautician.

Walking past the redwood benches placed strategically along the walk, past the man-made pond and the gazebo which is the center of the entire landscape, Jennie wondered where Patrick intended to rest from their continuous tour of the property and when he would start talking to her about his real concerns.

She didn't have to wonder long though. Patrick stopped next to the ash tree on the far side of the lawn and sat himself on the redwood

bench that was shaded by the tall tree.

**"Come sit with me, Jennie."**

He said, showing no obvious signs of fatigue.

**"I love gardens,"**

he added once she sat next to him.

**"It smells so invigorating, doesn't it?"**

For lack of anything to say, Jennie nodded. She fixed a smile for Patrick and waited for him to start revealing his purpose for dragging her all over the property. She kept a cool outlook but inside she was really nervous mainly because Lisa is not around to act as buffer when things gets difficult.

She knew last night's jovial discussion was not enough to satiate Patrick's mind. And what a mind he has! More than inquisitive, astute, tenacious . . . just more than everything, which makes him scary especially if you have something to hide just like her.

**"This garden was my idea,"**

he averred, leaning back on the bench and staring ahead.

**"I knew you are into photography, an artist, and I thought having a beautiful garden would help with your creative spirit."**

**"Oh . . ."**

Okay, maybe Patrick isn't out to get her. Maybe she thought too much of his actions. Maybe he was satisfied by her answers last night.

**"Thank you, Grandpa. That was very nice of you,"**

she said, easing up on her nerves, overwhelmed by his thoughtfulness.

**"I always did take scenery shots when I have the time and it makes for a good backdrop too."**

Off to their right, the sprinkler system had come on.

**"Yes,"**

he said in a monotone, throwing a quick glance at the spewing water then staring straight again.

**"The view from your room must be quite breathtaking especially with that balcony. Those huge glass windows in Lisa's room doesn't even compare, I assume."**

Absentmindedly she nodded, her gaze fixed on the sprinkler.

**"I love that balcony. It makes my room airy and cozy. Mornings are extra lovely too. The colors of the garden is so vibrant and—"**

She paused immediately, realizing that she had just confirmed to Patrick that the spot in the house he was staring at is indeed her room.

She wanted to slap herself. The word stupid should be written across her forehead. She had fallen into an old man's trap! And she didn't even see it coming.

Her worried eyes swung hastily at him and she nearly fainted when she saw that he had stopped staring at the house and is now looking at her with an all-knowing grin on his weathered face.

**"Grandpa . . . that's my work room,"**

she quickly claimed hoping to salvage her mistake.

**"Yes, my work room where I work sometimes with photographs . . . you know, work room."**

Jennie knew it was the lamest explanation ever, but the meaningful grin on his face seem to have shrunk her ability to think and her ability to utter a proper sentence. Inwardly, she groaned and fought

against the wild urge to flee from the bench to hide herself from Patrick's unsettling stare.

But where will she hide? They had toured the house earlier. He knows every room, every nook and cranny and every servant.

*He's got everything planned out!*

**"I've been described many ways, Jennie. Old, stubborn, a little crazy. And all those are true, by the way. But what I am most is perceptive. Call it a gift or a talent. I just am,"**

Patrick said casually, shrugging.

He didn't sound angry or annoyed which Jennie took as a good sign.

**"L—Lisa said you are . . . perceptive, Grandpa."**

**"Good. So now we understand each other?"**

**"Y—yes . . . I think so."**

**"Last night must have been uncomfortable for you sleeping in Lisa's bed for the first—"**

Her mouth went ahead of her and cut him off.

**"I've slept there several times."**

Then she bit her lip and averted her gaze, belatedly berating herself for keeping up with the untruth she and Lisa agreed to say.

**"I see."**

He commented but Jennie could detect the suspicion in his voice.

*Who was she kidding?!*

It would take a lot more than her words to convince him. Maybe if she showed him the hickey . . .

*oh forget it!*

She's not that bold and besides it will only prove that last night they made out.

A slight sense of apprehension seems to creep up her spine and immediately she began thinking of a plausible excuse to explain to him the need for the lie but Patrick's next words completely blew her mind away.

**"So then, there would be no problem for you answering this question. Is the rest of her body as conditioned as her lips?"**

Her jaw just about dropped at a staggering velocity to the cemented path and crashed into tiny bits rendering it a useless part for speech. The question echoed back and forth inside her ears amplified each time it bounces back hurting her eardrums.

But Patrick seems to be unaware of Jennie's astonishment. In the same languid voice, he continued to relate,

**"A couple of ladies during my plane ride here were reading a magazine with Lisa's picture in it. I heard them ask that question. I would have answered them, if I could, but obviously I don't know. I'm just the grandfather. It would look weird if I knew the answer and besides I'm not really interested in knowing."**

He unflappably said.

**"You on the other hand would surely know such details since you're the wife and as you claim, has been sleeping with him several times now. And when I say sleeping, I mean sleeping after a job well done."**

Jennie closed her eyes and silently prayed for . . . she doesn't know what she should be praying for exactly. Patrick just managed to impair her brain of reasonable thoughts and left her with no other option except admitting the truth. With a hopeless sigh, she said,

**"It's useless for me to keep denying, isn't it?"**

**"Entirely up to you, Jennie."**

He bluntly declared, but his lips were showing a winning smile.

**"I am old and my eyes blurry but I'm not blind or stupid. I know last night was the first time you shared a bed."**

**"I'm impressed by your perceptiveness, Grandpa."**

She admitted with a wobbly smile.

**"Perceptiveness has nothing to do with it."**

She eyed him askance.

**"What . . . is it?"**

He grinned, looking several years younger.

**"I saw you last night sneaking in the hallway to get to your room and lugging your things to Lisa's room. Of course, the conclusion to that is obvious and besides Lisa's room doesn't have a single touch of femininity in it. It was all hers even the smell."**

Jennie collapsed back on the bench, laughing softly.

**"Is this why you let Lisa attend the meeting? To coerce me into admitting the truth?"**

**"Coerce is such a strong word. I prefer to use talk. Talk you into admitting."**

**"Ah, okay."**

She said, giggling.

**"Sneakily talk me into admitting."**

**"Yes,"**

Patrick agreed.

**"That meeting is really boring, though. Makes me catatonic just listening to those people blabber. Lisa can handle it. Besides,**



**this is so much better, isn't it?"**

She shot him a wary glance.

**"Which is better? You not attending the meeting or me admitting the truth?"**

**"Very clever. But it's both,"**

he answered with a chuckle. Then he paused, his face suddenly turning somber along with his voice.

**"Jennie, I know the marriage was difficult to accept for both of you that's why no one in the family expected anything . . . anything like what I saw last night. I also didn't come here to play cupid—I'm too old for that sort of shit. I'd rather see you two being civil to each other while working on the relationship than magically jump right into being intimate. But you two were really good pretending like a couple. Had me convinced for a moment."**

Jennie's couldn't help but smile pleasantly as she turned her face at Lisa's grandfather.

**"Grandpa, we weren't pretending."**

Patrick hesitated, narrowing his eyes—his perceptiveness at work. But as he stared at her twinkling eyes coupled with the soft smile on her lips, what he saw was honesty and playful haughtiness because for once he assumed wrong. He leaned back on the bench and breathed a laugh that sounded like he was happy to be mistaken.

**"Well then . . . I stand corrected."**

She accepted that with a nod.

**"Lisa and I are friends now, Grandpa. We haven't crossed that line yet but who knows, maybe next month or next week . . . or tomorrow . . ."**

**"I feel better knowing that."**

**"Just please don't say anything about this to my stepmother,"**

Jennie said as a plea, her eyes imploring him to understand.

He frowned, a little bewildered by her tone. Then, as if dismissing the thought, he said,

**"Just between you and me, Jennie, I never really liked Chaerin. The word creepy comes to mind."**

Her face shone with relief and with a thankful smile she flung her arms at Patrick in a hug.

**"Grandpa, you are so adorable!"**

Lisa felt like shit. The meeting was the most boring and dragging meeting she ever attended. It had old men in attendance and some of them disturbed her sense of smell and others were so old they had to be reminded where they were every five minutes or so.

Her grandfather should have attended that damn meeting. He would have fit right in. She, on the other hand, looked conspicuous sitting amongst the oldies. They were so fucking old that most of them actually believed she was Patrick Manoban wearing a hip business suit and looking six decades younger.

*How can they have deduced something like that anyway? She's a fucking woman for Pete's sake!*

To make it all worse, in the middle of a discussion about a certain shareholder who sold his stock to an unfavorable individual, Lisa's sleepiness decided to come back full force. She tried her best fighting off the temptation to close her eyes and at the same time still listen to the ongoing talk on the table in case her grandfather decides to ask a detailed account of what transpired.

As a result, the small throb in her temple when she left the house that morning became a terrible headache and kept getting worse and worse as the day wore on. By afternoon, she heard herself cough, her voice became raspy and then chills racked her weakening body. That's when he made the decision to go home.

*Screw the meeting!*

Arriving in the mansion, Lisa fought a wave of dizziness as she went in search of Jennie and her grandfather who according to the butler were both in the salon. She leaned against the door frame to regain some energy before going inside to make her presence known.

But once she stepped in, Lisa was almost certain she was seeing strange things because of her rotten illness. The vision before her was so weird and so wrong on many levels. Patrick was seated on a cinnamon upholstered bench wearing a cap on backwards, a loose shirt, a red and black jacket, track pants and running shoes that all belonged to Lisa and she was diligently posing in front of Jennie who was excitedly snapping away with the camera.

**"What the hell are you two doing?"**

She retorted, her voice sounding hoarse to her own ears.

Jennie whirled around in surprise, her face wreathed in smiles and her eyes alive with cheerfulness.

**"Lisa! You're back!"**

She cheerfully greeted, placing the camera on a square side table striding over to her. Patrick remained seated on the bench as a silent spectator.

Jennie grabbed her arm pulling her further inside the room but suddenly stopped, eyed her with a strange frown searching her haggard face before commenting,

**"You're hot."**

**"So I've been told but thanks,"**

Lisa lazily drawled, forehead creasing as another wave of dizziness assailed her.

**"No, I mean you're really hot!"**

Lisa moved closer to her and weakly wrapped her arms around her

slim shoulders to support her weight.

**"I'm flattered as hell, babe."**

**"Lisa!"**

Jennie scolded with a hint of worry in her voice.

**"You're burning up. Are you sick?"**

Lisa nodded.

**"Like shit."**

Patrick shook his head in disappointment, and he voiced it aloud for Jennie to hear.

"So much for

*tomorrow."*

# [11] Caring

**"Stop pushing that vile stuff to my mouth!"**

Lisa rasped disgustedly eyeing the spoonful of dark green liquid Jennie was urging her to take.

Jennie frowned at her husband's stubborn tone but persisted, climbing the bed to straddle the Thai woman's waist to pin her in place careful not to spill the liquid.

**"Nini, I appreciate you straddling me like this but not while forcing me to take that foul-smelling liquid. It ruins the moment,"**

Lisa complained with a groan, grabbing a pillow to cover her face.

**"It's for your cough! Get your mind out of the gutter just this once and take this,"**

Jennie clamored, past being cajoling already. For twenty minutes, she's been urging Lisa to take the cough medicine, but the Thai woman proved to be hard headed saying she only needs water and some rest to get over her illness.

**"If you don't take this, I'll force you to take castor oil."**

Lisa flung the pillow off and barked a nasty sounding cough.

**"Castor oil is a laxative, Jennie!"**

She exclaimed after her coughing subsided, narrowing her eyes at the brunette on top of her.

**"Are you sure you want to make me feel better? Or are you here to play a prank on me while I don't have any energy to fight back?"**

Jennie shook her head and her lips turned up into a funny little smile.

**"I'm kidding, Lisa. You're being such a kid with taking a simple cough medicine. I want you to feel better."**

**"Cough syrups are for kids. I will take a capsule or tablet form of cough medicine,"**

Lisa argued, still averting her face from the spoon hovering close to her mouth.

**"Liquid medicines take effect faster than the solid ones."**

**"How do you know this exactly? Have you taken care of a sick person before?"**

**"No..."**

Jennie shyly admitted but there was a sound of protest in her voice when Lisa raised an impatient brow.

**"But Mrs. Song said it works that way and you can't argue about her experience with sick people. Grandpa seconded her reasoning."**

**"God!"**

Lisa groaned, raising both arms heavenward then letting them fall to her chest when she coughed again.

**"Why is everyone against me in this house?!"**

Ignoring her dramatics, Jennie slipped a hand on her nape to support Lisa to prop up against the pillows by the headboard of the bed and lifted the spoon close to her mouth again.

**"Please?"**

Jennie entreated with a girlish pout.

Looking at her imploring eyes which she could have sworn showed

an indication of worry, Lisa heaved a defeated sigh and after letting a wave of dizziness pass, sat up against the pillows.

**"Only for you,"**

Lisa grumbled but there was no trace of irritation or anger in her voice.

Jennie smiled and carefully slipped the spoon between her open lips. Lisa winced at the ugly taste and swallowed, immediately grabbing the glass of water Jennie handed to wash out the taste of medicine. She emptied the glass in one swig before handing it back to her and leaned back against the pillows weakly wiping her lips with the back of her hand.

Satisfied, Jennie moved from her straddled position but Lisa quickly grabbed her hips back in place.

**"Stay,"**

the dirty blonde haired ordered. When the brunette was about to protest, she added in a gentle voice,

**"Please."**

**"You have to rest, Lisa."**

**"You promised you'd sleep here. My being sick doesn't change a thing."**

Lisa closed her eyes in weariness adjusting her body so that she lay comfortably on the bed as she tightened her hands on her wife's hips.

**"And I will rest better with you here."**

**"Why do you have to be so cute? It's impossible to say no to you."**

Jennie said it in way that sounded like she was exasperated by her request but Lisa sensed the humor in her tone even without seeing the smile that tugged at the corners of her lips.

After replacing the empty glass and spoon on the tray atop the square side table, Jennie slid from Lisa's hips and hold and sit on her legs next to the currently sick woman's chest.

**"Thank you,"**

Lisa mumbled as her hand reached up to her temples and fingers began moving to massage her head. The motion of Jennie's fingers made Lisa sigh and relax deeper into the soft pillows, slowly soothing the throb in her head.

**"I wasn't planning on sleeping in my room, Lisa. You're sick. What kind of a wife would I be if I don't take care of you?"**

Jennie told her matter-of-factly. It would appear her attention is focused on the massage she was doing but in truth she can't seem to stop touching Lisa.

**"Unless you change your mind."**

**"Why would I change my mind?"**

Lisa murmured, her hand crept up to rest on the brunette's thighs and began lethargically caressing the skin just below the hem of her shorts sending a jolt of sensation to run through Jennie's nerve endings.

Jennie shrugged forcing to ignore her hand drawing indistinct figures on her skin and voiced out teasingly,

**"Because I'm making you drink cough syrup."**

**"For you, that's an unpleasantness I'm willing to take."**

The words seem to flow out of Lisa's mouth naturally. It gave Jennie a feeling that Lisa had enough practice saying that to many women.

Jennie chuckled softly, trying her best not to let her words affect her.

**"You have a way with words, Lisa. I give you that. Even an illness can't dampen your enigmatic side. I don't blame the**



**ladies for wanting to be associated with you."**

Without a moment pause, Lisa said in a yielding voice,

**"You are the only lady associated with me, Nini."**

*At the moment.*

Jennie's mind reminded out of nowhere, but she paid no heed to the voice and smiled at the sick woman not knowing what to say.

Lisa opened her eyes after a minute when she did not come up with a witty comeback and eyed her strangely.

**"That's it? No—'yeah right, Lisa' or 'you're only saying that coz' you want to have sex with me?'"**

Her voice was soft and weak but Jennie could see from her face that Lisa wanted a reaction from her.

**"Are you—are you saying that because of sex?"**

Jennie asked, intently watching her handsome face that was nestled on the fluffy pillow but she did not stop massaging her head.

Lisa shifted sideways and took hold of the brunette's hips, motioning Jennie to lie down next to her. When Jennie stretched out on the bed by her side, Lisa held her face close so that they were staring eye to eye and Lisa muttered in a firm voice that was meant to erase any doubt from her mind,

**"No."**

And it did. The simple 'no' made Jennie's cheeks feel warm and her already erratic pulse became even more jumpy. For whatever reason, she let out an inaudible sigh of both relief and pleasure. Jennie knew, if Lisa asked her right now to have sex with her, she would say yes. In fact, the idea has been bothering her since last night.

However, it's probably not the right time. Partially because Lisa is sick and Jennie's main concern at the moment is to make her well

but mostly because she realized earlier

*honeymooning*

at this time, with Patrick still in the house and Lisa being so busy with work, isn't really what she'd consider

*romantic*

.

Jennie's fairly certain she wants her first time with Lisa to be romantic . . . whatever that entails it.

Sure, she had been touched before by her exes, but the tide of sensations Lisa evokes when she touches her is an entirely different experience for her. Wonderful would be the word she'd use. Yet, it seems not even enough to describe how the Thai woman really makes her feel.

Jennie doesn't want to go far afield in finding reasons for whatever feelings are involved in her decision since the terms of their relationship still hasn't changed. She's just willing to overlook all her reservations and enjoy her passion for Lisa. She's entitled to that and besides it was getting harder and harder to resist the Thai woman with alluring dark hazel eyes . . . she's only human after all.

Earlier, when she was taking pictures of Patrick, thoughts of consummating their marriage crossed her mind time and again. Her mind kept thinking back to their make out sessions that it became an effort to keep herself from blushing in front of the old man.

Who knows what out of this world comment Patrick would have said if he noticed how her mind was wandering to his granddaughter? Although, Jennie reckoned, he probably would have been pleased by the direction of her thoughts.

And Lisa would have been too if she wasn't so sick to notice the excitement on her face when she came home earlier. Admittedly, she was a little dampened by her being sick. She was actually looking forward to tonight, almost certain that their make outs will end with sex. That thought alone made her heart race and her body

quiver animatedly.

But Jennie got a hold of herself and immediately felt like a wench for thinking about sex when she should have been worried for Lisa. She had silently berated herself then shoved all thoughts of sex aside to take care of her husband.

The thought came creeping back into her head though. There's something about being this close to Lisa, her eyes hazy from the heat of her fever, her dirty blonde hair slightly messed up but nevertheless still showing a charming side that arouses her senses.

*Who's horny now?*

Jennie's mind asked and again she had to shake off the thought.

Smiling, Jennie pushed her face closer and kissed Lisa's forehead gently. The Thai woman was so close to her that she could study each of her eyelashes and see the intense color of her eyes that looked like had specks of light and golden in them, probably from the reflection of the light in the room.

*It should be a crime for a woman to have such mesmerizing eyes.*

Jennie thought to herself.

Lisa chuckled quietly.

**"No one has ever told me that before."**

**"I—said it—aloud?!"**

Jennie gasped, wide eyed and slightly flustered by her own inattentiveness leaning away from the Thai woman to see the girlish smirk on her face.

*Stop thinking about sex Jennie! She's sick you idiot!*

**"I don't mind."**

**"Of course, you don't! Anything to fuel your innate arrogance is always welcome."**

Jennie pinched Lisa's arm as her cheeks grew hot in sudden embarrassment.

**"Ouch!"**

Lisa cried, jerking her arm away from her fingers and engulfing her hand in hers.

**"I'm sick, Nini. I need tender loving care not to be pinch to death."**

*Tender loving care sounds nice. Get a hold of yourself, Jennie!*

She rolled her eyes pretending to be annoyed but her lips couldn't help but twitch in a guilty smile.

**"My goodness, you are demanding!"**

Lisa did not quip back smartly. Instead she smiled at her and carefully drew her small frame close for a hug so that Jennie's face was pressed against her warm chest.

**"Being sick sucks,"**

Lisa griped quietly.

**"This is your second night here with me and I end up ill. I'm a lousy husband."**

Jennie didn't know if Lisa realized it but she has a way of saying words that sound so sweet at the most unexpected moments. Her attraction to the Thai woman is growing along with attachment but instead of squirming away like she usually would, she welcomes it with an open mind.

The doubt in her head about their marriage had been slowly ebbing since they became friends. And a huge chunk of it chipped off when she had the talk with Patrick. She doesn't have to worry that much anymore—well, she does but only where Chaerin was concerned.

And right now, that particular concern seems too remote to happen. Chaerin is most likely enjoying herself with her father's fortune and

has forgotten about her, which is working well in her favor.

**"I wouldn't say that,"**

Jennie whispered to Lisa's chest, feeling the heat seeping from it because of her fever.

**"If it's alright with you, I'd like to be a proper wife and take care of my sick husband."**

Lisa's brows furrowed and tilted her chin up to stare at her face. Confusion was etched on her expression and she also looked shocked by what she said.

**"First you say I'm cute then my eyes mesmerizing. Now you want to be a proper wife? Not that I'm complaining, Nini, but . . . am I missing something here?"**

Lisa asked suspiciously.

**"What happened with you and Grandpa while I was in the meeting?"**

**"Nothing!"**

Jennie replied pulling an innocent look.

**"You should go to sleep now. I'll be here when you wake up."**

Lisa seemed to read her facial expression for a moment, then when her drowsy mind couldn't come up with a proper explanation for the sudden change in her—vibe or is it outlook?—gave up on figuring her out and relented,

**"Yeah. I should probably sleep this off."**

**"Good."**

Jennie inched away from her so that she can rest comfortably on the bed. Pulling the covers up to the sick woman's waist, Jennie felt her forehead with the back of her hand and kissed her cheek.

**"I'll wake you up after four hours. You have to take medicine for your fever."**

Lisa nodded with a weak smile then her eyes slowly drifted close. After some minutes, Jennie let out relieved sigh while watching her breathing begin to even out. She was in imminent danger of jumping the sleeping woman. She never expected her attraction—desire for her husband to be this strong once she let's go of her self-possession.

It's completely out of character for Jennie to desire someone this bad and at this inopportune time. It was like Lisa switched something on inside her body during their make outs that's making her think like a sexually promiscuous woman.

Feeling the sudden need to put some distance between her and a sleeping Lisa, Jennie carefully moved off the bed and quietly crept out of the room to find her cellphone. At times like this, Irene would be the one to call.

Once she found her phone on the rectangular table in the second floor hallway, she quickly dialed Irene's number and waited for her to answer after five long rings.

**"Why hello Jennie Ruby Jane Kim! You finally remembered me,"**

Irene said a bit derisively.

**"I thought you disappeared off the face of the Earth with that husband of yours."**

**"Rene, don't be such a drama queen,"**

Jennie rebuked with a laugh.

**"I'm sorry I haven't called you in a while. But I texted you often, didn't I? I've been busy and I'm sure you are too."**

She heard Irene yawn, intentional or not, she didn't try to hide it.

**"I'm always busy but I make time for friends, Kim. My texts are**

**actual sentences not one-liners like what some people's text,"**

Irene huffed but Jennie knew her friend well to be aware that it's all part of Irene's dramatics.

**"Irene, I'm sorry. Things have been a little crazy lately,"**

Jennie said sincerely then she added on a jest,

**"I'm on my knees, begging you to forgive me."**

**"How do I know you're on your knees? Don't get smart with me Jen."**

**"Okay. I guess I shouldn't have called—"**

**"Fine. I forgive you,"**

Irene conceded and Jennie almost laughed out loud but did her best to smother the sound from escaping past her lips.

**"Thank you."**

**"Yeah, yeah. I'm a great friend, I know."**

Irene muttered impatiently then Jennie heard a door banging before Irene said,

**"So, it's been weeks, what's been going on between you and husband dearest? Did Manoban throw you on the floor and fucked you senseless already?"**

Jennie's brown orbs grew wide and she gasped. Is she really that desperate for Lisa that even Irene who can't see her can sense it?

*What kind of sexual bug has gotten into her?!*

**"No, Irene."**

Jennie mumbled.

**"Nothing like that or even close to it."**

**"What the hell is that woman waiting for?!"**

**"Me."**

There was a short pause on the other end and then a sound of water running.

**"Well then, what are you waiting for?"**

**"Her."**

**"Okay, who are you and what have you done to my friend?"**

Irene retorted, altogether confused and impatient.

**"Jennie Kim makes sense when I talk to her. She's waiting for you and you're waiting for her?"**

**"Yes."**

**"I get why she's waiting for you but you—why are you waiting for her? Does little or big junior Lisa need prepping before she can perform? My opinion of her just went down several notches—I swear."**

**"She needs TLC."**

**"Tomato, lettuce and uhh . . . catsup? Whatever for?"**

Irene said in an incongruous voice.

**"Weird much."**

**"Tender loving care! Are you being intentionally dense? She's sick, Irene."**

Irene exhaled an exasperated breath and the sound of water stopped in the background.

**"Sick as in sick or sick as in she has sexually transmitted disease? If it's STD, I suggest you start looking for another lover. I don't care how rich, handsome or how good she is in bed. It's not worth getting STD for."**



Jennie almost choked in her laughter, widely looking along the hallway for any servant who maybe passing by. In a hushed tone, she explained,

**"She has a fever and cough, Irene. She's been stressed with work and Grandpa is also here—"**

**"Stop right there,"**

Irene commanded, immediately ceasing her explanation. A door closing was heard again and an indiscernible voice of someone else talking.

**"Is there someone with you? Who was that?"**

Jennie couldn't help but ask.

**"It's the radio,"**

Irene replied easily. Then went back to the topic.

**"Correct me if I'm wrong . . . are you telling me that you're finally ready to have sex with Manoban but she comes home sick and unable to get physical with you?"**

**"Yeah . . ."**

Jennie whispered, suddenly uneasy with the conversation.

Irene made a clicking sound with her tongue and Jennie can almost see her shaking her head in disappointment.

**"You—how bad?"**

Jennie cupped a hand over her mouth and groaned into the mouthpiece.

**"I think . . . it's bad,"**

she affirmed.

**"This has never happened to me before. But she's really sick. I'm sure sex is not in her head right now and even if it is, she**

doesn't have the strength."

**"That bad, huh?"**

**"Like a craving for food."**

A peal of unexpected laughter echoed thru the phone.

**"You've got it bad, Jen!"**

**"Yes, it's bad. We've established that!"**

**"So what's the problem? You've got it bad. Do something about it."**

**"Stop saying bad! I don't want to want her at this time. Her grandfather is here. She has this tendency to interrupt and barge into our room. Can you imagine being caught in the middle of sex by a seventy-year-old man?! "**

She whined in agitation.

**"I feel like an inconsiderate human being for even thinking of sex when she's sick. I'm worse than a wench!"**

**"You're overreacting. That's bad,"**

Irene averred dismissively.

**"Here's what you do, first, lock your door to keep nosy old man out and as additional measure, place a heavy table or cabinet against the door just in case. Then tell Manoban you want her and I'm sure she'll get over her illness quickly."**

**"I can't do that! I'm not that daring. I'd rather she make the first move. Will you stop saying bad!"**

Irene snorted and in bored tone, she offered,

**"Well then, May the force be with you. You need it—badly."**



Throughout the night, Lisa's coughing tugged her from a drugged slumber to a state of on and off awareness of her surroundings. Slightly shifting her body sideways, she forced her eyes open to see that it was already morning judging from the brightness peeking in between the draperies.

Turning her face on the pillow, her eyes found the round clock hanging on the wall left of the bed that indicated it was 7:00. Trying to clear her head, she immediately concluded she's still sick based on her weariness and aching muscles although, it's no longer as bad as yesterday.

Memories of last night came drifting back slowly. Lisa remembered that each time she coughs, Jennie's small hand would find its way on her chest moving in a circular motion that somehow soothed her discomfort. Lisa was also awakened at certain hours to take more medicine and at one point she recalled her shirt was changed because she was drenched in sweat when her fever had broken.

Lisa's hand reached up to feel her forehead and was pleased to know the fever is indeed gone. She turned abruptly to the other side of the bed to see if Jennie was still next to her but instantly winced at the throb that resurfaced in her temples. In slow movements, she shifted again and managed a smile when she saw Jennie sprawled out on her stomach peacefully sleeping.

Lisa knew the brunette was exhausted from waking up every so often the entire night to make sure she takes her medicine on time and to check if she was having the chills or perspiring from the effect of the fever medicine.

*Wifely.*

That's how Jennie was last night. And despite the fuzziness of her mind, Lisa couldn't help but feel so damn pleased because she stayed with her all night. Whether her wife's actions rooted from a sense of obligation or out of the kindness of her heart, Lisa doesn't care. Jennie took care of her when she doesn't really need to and that's all that matters.

Lisa inched closer to her sleeping frame and gently smoothed a hand along the length of her silky curls. She was touched beyond belief by her wifely actions probably because being cared for by a woman other than her mother has never happened to her before.

It also amazes Lisa how of all the women she had in her life after Niki, Jennie is the only one who accepted her and gave her a chance at friendship even when she was behaving badly towards her.

Even before her grandfather arrived, Lisa already felt attached to her somehow. She couldn't stop thinking about her and she knows sex has nothing to do with it. She looks forward to being able to see her every day, be the recipient of that jaunty sideways gummy smile of hers or hear the infectious sound of her giggles. And her day wouldn't be complete without having to tangle her long fingers in her glorious mane.

Lisa had been acting like a smitten girl and she can't do anything to stop it.

The question is, does she want to stop it?

A part of her is saying yes because she went down this road before with Niki. She was her everything, even planning a future together but look where that ended. She swore she wouldn't make the same mistake twice. Never let a woman know they own your heart. They toy with it for amusement and dispose of it once they get bored.

And that's the part that hurts. It almost drives you insane.

Yet, another side of her logic is telling her not to stop . . . that Jennie is different. The circumstances in which they met were different. There hasn't been a profession of love between them. In fact, love is never mentioned in their relationship. They are friends in a marriage that benefits them both. It's a practical arrangement that will end in five years—legally agreed upon and it will be an expected separation.

No one gets hurt . . .

*hopefully.*

A jarring sound erupted from the cellphone on the side table interrupting Lisa's trail of thought. Then Jennie automatically roused from her sleep, her hand blindly reaching out to press a button on the phone to stop the annoying tone.

She turned over on her back and stretched, opening her eyes to look at Lisa. Instead of a sleeping Lisa, she was greeted by alert hazel eyes and a handsome smile that looked infinitely better than last night.

**"Good morning,"**

Lisa chirped in less raspy voice, running her fingers through her tousled curls.

**"How are you feeling?"**

Jennie propped up on an elbow and checked her temperature, smiling when she felt her cool forehead.

**"Better. Thanks to you,"**

Lisa replied, letting her hand slide down from the brunette's hair to stroke her arm then threaded their fingers together.

Jennie covered her mouth and yawned, smiling sheepishly after.

**"You're welcome but you have to take cough syrup again."**

**"Okay,"**

Lisa agreed at once, releasing her hand to prop up on the bed and reach for the medicine on the tray.

**"I'll do it."**

Leaning back in surprise, Jennie broke into a grin at her sudden eagerness to drink the cough syrup that she referred to as disgusting last night

**. "Are you sure you're feeling better?"**

**"Yeah. Why?"**

Jennie shook her head, amusedly staring at her gulp down the dark green liquid like she's loving the taste of it.

**"Nothing . . ."**

She sat up and swung her legs on the side of the bed.

**"I'll just go and bring you breakfast. I asked Mrs. Song last night to prepare something for you."**

**"I'm not hungry,"**

Lisa said after drinking water, sinking back on the bed. She gently pulled the brunette back in against her chest and engulfed her in an embrace.

**"Lisa?"**

Jennie asked, slightly tensing from her sudden touch but she adjusted her body so that her weight wasn't pressing down on the sick woman.

**"Is something wrong? You have to eat to get your strength back."**

Lisa shook her head slowly, gazing into her eyes as though she could find an answer in the brown depths.

**"Nini, you're tired, lacking in sleep and you have to go to work later. Why did you take care of me?"**

The question surprised Jennie. Lisa could tell from the curling of her brows.

**"You mean—I shouldn't have taken care of you?"**

**"That's not what I mean. You willingly went through all that trouble all night just for me. I'm touched and thankful beyond**

**words, Nini."**

Lisa clarified, stroking her smooth cheek then her neck in a tender gesture that was slowly sending a thrill down Jennie's body.

**"But I honestly wasn't expecting it because you really didn't have to and I know you also need your energy today for work so I'm curious—why do all that for me?"**

Jennie closed her eyes and sighed, as if making an important decision. After a long pause she opened her eyes, and Lisa was somewhat taken aback by how much emotion was reflected in her clear brown eyes.

**"Because I c-care . . . I care about you, Lisa . . . that's why..."**

Jennie admitted shyly, down casting her vision after she said the words.

The timid admission sent Lisa's pulse racing like wild animals in a stampede. She also closed her eyes briefly and sucked in a calming breath. She felt like she had been waiting to hear that from her and finally having Jennie say it was like a prayer answered . . . and she doesn't even believe in praying. In a voice heavy with emotion, she said,

**"I care about you too, Nini . . . very much."**

Jennie raised shining brown eyes to her and Lisa could tell she was just as astonished as her. They never ever talked about their feelings. It was like a taboo topic for them and it certainly wasn't something they both planned or expected their friendship to lead to. It was both scary and overwhelming, especially for Lisa.

But now that it's out in the open and obviously they are very pleased by it, Lisa couldn't help but consider all the conditions that are involved in their marriage. Will that change too? Does this mean all bets are off? With a bit of hesitation, unsure if the brunette will still insist on the five year only marriage agreement, she asked,

**"Where do we go from here?"**

**"I'm not sure anymore, Lisa."**

Jennie replied on a shaky whisper, unconsciously pressing her body closer to the Thai woman.

Lisa's arms enclosed around her tightly and she buried her face in the softness of her hair.

"Neither am I, Nini . . .

*Neither am I.*

"



## [12] Unexpected - M!

Jennie glanced about the room with a tinge of nervousness that she couldn't understand why she was feeling. Maybe it had to do with her current position, sitting across a wide glass office desk waiting for her stepmother to come into the room—the office of the president and CEO.

There was something so gloomy and cold about the silent office that was decorated in tones of grey, from light to nearly black, and the walls were hung with various art works, abstract and distinct ones that showed more lifeless colors of black and white. They were framed in shiny black wood, fronted in glass and hung on the vinyl covered wall opposite the office table.

The upholstered chairs, smoked glass tables and even the small bar at the far corner of the spacious office matched the walls. The expensive furniture, the arrangement of the office and even the smell of the air freshener in the room does not in any way spell welcoming.

It looked more like a display room for expensive jewelry than an actual office. In fact, even a rowdy kid when placed inside this office will feel like he's in a fully furnished solitary confinement chamber but cannot touch anything for risk of being given the death penalty.

In simple terms, it looked elegant but felt scary. Jennie concluded that Chaerin probably has an obsession with black and grey which even showed in her demeanor most of the time—which is also just as unpleasant and as suffocating as this room.

The last time Jennie was in her father's office building was before he fell ill and at that time Kim Ji Yong's office looked very different—it was chrome and leather then and she remembered colorful modern art works hanging on the walls. Faintly, she wondered why Chaerin changed the interior of the office almost like she wanted to

forget the memory of her father.

Whatever it maybe, she doesn't really care much. Her concern at the moment is why she's been summoned here. When she received the call from Chaerin's secretary that morning while she was getting dressed for work, her mind had been running afloat and wondering about this sudden call demanding her presence in the office. She had argued with the new secretary—her father's former secretary, she learned upon arriving here, was fired when Chaerin took over the presidency—to just say what the purpose for the call was. But as it were, she was under strict orders from her boss to only relay such instructions.

Mostly out of curiosity, but of course against her better judgment, is the reason why she's even here. Getting impatient, she took a quick glance at the small digital clock sitting on one of the office tables laden with an assortment of books. Fifteen minutes. She's been waiting for fifteen freakin' minutes.

Maybe she should just go. But she at once ditched the idea aside. There had to be some important reason why she's been called in. Resignedly, she let her mind drift deciding to reconceptualize the shoot she was doing for InStyle magazine later . . . but her thoughts had other ideas as it instantly shifted to Lisa.

She's been riding on cloud nine since that little confession they had the other day. At first, she was hesitant—out of habit, because of her past experiences with people she cares about disappointing and hurting her in the end—to say what she's been feeling for the Thai woman. But then Lisa said it back and it was just as surprising as it was thrilling.

Lisa Manoban cares for her . . . who would've thought? She certainly didn't but then again, a lot of things have happened between them now that eight months ago she would have considered as ludicrous.

This morning her husband was back to her usual virile self and wasted no time in exercising her energy . . . which initially excited her to no end.

**"Good morning,"**

*Jennie chirped gaily, waking up to Lisa's face looking down at her with her charmingly girlish smile. "All better?"*

**"Not just yet,"**

*Lisa answered, her hand resting idly on the brunette's hip.*

*Jennie eyed her in bafflement, quickly checking her face for any sign of sickness but there was none. Her color was back. Her eyes were alert and overall, Lisa certainly didn't look weary anymore.*

**"Not just yet?"**

*She repeated. "Do you want me to sing you a song? You know, for encouragement to get up in the morning."*

*With a grin, the dirty blonde haired retorted, "I didn't know you sing."*

**"Everybody sings. It's just a matter of whether it's in tune or not,"**

*Jennie quipped back, sliding off the bed swiftly before the latter even realized she stood up.*

*Lisa sat up, keeping her soft gaze on her as she rounded the bed while gathering her messy hair in a loose bun. "Let's hear it!" She cheered. "I'm already intrigued."*

*Jennie giggled and she moved out of the Thai woman's line of vision, making a quick sprint to the bathroom. But before she could close the door, Lisa had pushed against it and easily wrestled her way inside. "Hey! I was here first. Wait for your turn!" She protested teasingly.*

**"Not until you sing a song,"**

*Lisa advanced toward her and easily grabbed her waist, lifting her to sit on the long-marbled space of the bathroom sink. "I'm not letting you go until I hear a song but make it snappy coz' I don't want to be late for work."*

*Jennie yelped in surprise as the backs of her thighs connected with the cold marble, but Lisa kept her firmly in place while she stood between her legs.*

**"Fine!"**

*She relented, steadying her breathing as she tried to decide what song to sing.*

*A playful smirk broke over her lips as she mentally picked a song. "Here goes . . ." Jennie made a show of prepping her vocal chords by rolling her shoulders, clearing her throat and making soft humming noises before she began to sing:*

**Oh Mister Sun, Sun**

**Mister golden sun!**

**Please shine down on her**

*Jennie tried her best to keep a normal expression, singing like she's so into the song, and not burst out laughing while she directly held her husband's gaze that was slowly acquiring a bamboozled look over her choice of song. But she still continued, rather enjoying herself in witnessing Lisa's reaction.*

**Oh Mister Sun, Sun**

**Mister golden sun!**

**Hiding behind a tree . .**

**.**

**Lisa Manoban is asking you**

**To please shine down**

**So she can play with you**

**Oh Mister Sun, Sun**

**Mister golden sun!**

**Please shine down on**

**Please shine down on her!**

*The air was utterly still when she finished the children's song. Lisa's face was a picture of someone weirded out by what she had just seen. Her brows were drawn straight, her head tipped to one side, her mouth agape and she was looking at her like she became another person.*

**"There you go. A song. Did I sound okay?"**

*Jennie posed in an expectant tone as though Lisa's opinion mattered much to her but actually she was ready to erupt in laughter.*

*Lisa seemed to shake herself back to the present. "Oh yeah . . . wow . . . you sing very well!" She replied warily. "You have a really nice voice, Nini."*

*Looking down at the Thai woman due to the height of the bathroom counter that made her a few inches higher than her head, Jennie gave Lisa an over bright smile, laying her hands over her well-defined shoulders.*

**"You really think so? Thank you!"**

**"Yeah."**

*Lisa was unsure how to react. "Um—was that really a song or am I hallucinating again?"*

*Jennie couldn't hold it any longer. Her hands flew over her already flushed face and she ruptured in hilarity. "You're just soo . . . just so—"*

*Lisa wrenched her hands off her face and held it flat on the marble on either side of her hips, a gleam of menace in her eye. "Someday . . . just you wait woman."*

**"Come on Lisa! How could you not know Mister Sun? And you have to admit it's an appropriate song in the morning."**

*Lisa grunted incoherently and gave a cursory glance at her smiling lips, but immediately her piercing hazel eyes swung back to her. "I have other*

*more appropriate things in mind."*

"

*Like what?" Jennie asked conscious of Lisa's mercurial change of mood.*

*A long silence followed as if the latter was thinking, and Jennie saw her eyes looking at her hair that was falling off the loose knot then at her profile. "Like this . . ." Those rough hands suddenly encasing hers on the marble top lifted, then one found her nape to draw her face down close . . . moving her lips closer and closer to the Thai woman's plump lips.*

*Lisa's lips were soft and appealing as she tipped her head to the side and moved it in a lazy, seductive motion back and forth over the brunette pliant lips. She leaned even closer and her restless hands stopped on the chocolate brown-eyed girls' hips, pulling her in tightly.*

*The Thai woman's warm tongue circled Jennie's lips sending tiny shudders over her entire body and it didn't take long before her lips parted and answered her tongue with a willing response. The kiss grew warmer and more arousing steadily as it went on. But in the midst of it Jennie suddenly felt her world tilt and realized she was being lifted off the marble to stand on the bathroom floor.*

*Then, in one deft motion, her shirt had slid up exposing her breasts to Lisa's questing hands and mouth. Jennie leaned towards her softly and moaning, running her fingers through her husband's chestnut hair reveling in the wonderful feelings she was stirring in her body and realizing that she's been missing this—so much—for two days.*

*And as if sensing her thoughts, Lisa voiced out throatily, "I missed this—I missed us like this."*

*Jennie nodded unable to force a sound past her lips. Lisa smiled that seductively charming smile of hers and her eyes twinkled as she lowered her mouth to the brunette's already swollen lips, shutting out all thoughts from her foggy brain.*

*While Lisa's compelling tongue dueled with Jennie's, the former's fingers slipped inside the front of the brunette's cotton shorts, inching between the lace panty and skin in a slow motion giving her an opportunity to*

object.

*But she didn't, much to Lisa's delight. Jennie's body responded fully, even straining to her, her leg lifting, and Lisa took it as consent. Her knowing fingers fluidly found her soft moist flesh and began arousing her with a thrilling touch until she lost all sense of her surroundings; solely focused on Lisa and her wonderful hands.*

*A strangled groan erupted from Jennie as the friction of her husband's fingers inside her sensitive core created a heat that came slowly, beginning in her toes, trailing up her legs, settling in her stomach until her head was thrown back and waves of pleasure overcame her senses.*

*She clamped a steadying arm across her shoulders, holding her tightly against her while her body still trembled from the height her husband brought her. Jennie felt her fingers gently withdraw and in the next second Lisa's powerful arms had closed around her slowly shuddering frame, her chin resting atop of her head, her breathing ragged and painfully heavy.*

*Jennie felt her aroused erection pressing against her. Lisa was tense and rigid. But much to her surprise, Lisa didn't do anything to ease her obvious pain. She didn't go any further than hugging her tightly as if trying to share in her fulfilled feelings. "Lisa . . . let . . ."*

*Lisa shook her head, silencing her. "It's okay, Nini. I'll manage," she whispered tenderly. "Just—I'll go first in using the bathroom."*

*That wasn't at all what Jennie meant or wanted. She didn't want them to stop. But Lisa was being the perfect gentlewoman all morning and she was quite in a hurry after she went out of the bathroom, apologizing because she can't drop her off at the studio since she was running late already.*

*The disappointment in her face must have been evident as she watched Lisa sped off the drive that Patrick's perfectly observant eyes picked up on this and he commented offhandedly, "That girl has lapses sometimes especially when she's busy. She tends to overlook things. But don't worry, Jennie, there's always tomorrow . . . or even tonight."*

*Of course, that simple, seemingly innocent comment had caused Jennie*

*to blush to a deep shade of red. But what did she expect, Patrick Manoban always has impeccable timing and he does tend to say the darnest things.*

The sound of muted voices outside the office door brought Jennie's attention back to her present surroundings, quickly fanning her face to keep the warmth from growing in her face over the memory with Lisa.

It didn't take long before Chaerin appeared from the door with a thin balding man, in wide rimmed spectacles that were too thick it made his eyes look beady even from a distance, following behind her.

In chic business attire that looked decidedly of designer brand, Lee Chaerin's surgically enhanced face was devoid of any expression when she entered her office and saw Jennie sitting on one of the chairs facing her table. She walked briskly toward her high-backed leather seat fitting for a president of a huge corporation and slid onto it without acknowledging her stepdaughter's presence.

She turned to the man she came in with and told him to leave them for the moment.

**"I will tell my secretary to call you in after I'm done here,"**

Chaerin said curtly and the frail looking man obediently left without question.

Jennie remained in her seat, matching Chaerin's blank face with one of her stoic expression. Never betraying the uneasiness she felt being in her stepmother's presence. But curiosity was eating her up from the inside.

Once the man went out and closed the door, she raised a quizzical brow at Chaerin silently telling her to get on with whatever she wanted to discuss to her that required her to be physically present.

**"Jennie,"**

Chaerin began in a bland tone that belied some sort of abhorrence



to the name she had just spoken.

**"You're probably wondering why I asked you to come here—"**

**"Yes. I am."**

She interrupted tersely.

A glacial look crossed Chaerin's features, her thin eyebrows that were arched high off her forehead it almost looked unnatural, curled into a frown evident of her displeasure at Jennie's tone of voice.

**"Fine. Enough of this pleasantry."**

Jennie nearly scoffed.

*Pleasantry my ass!*

If her countenance can be called pleasant then no face is unpleasant anymore.

**"We were never pleasant with each other, Chaerin. So I really don't see the point of bothering with it now. It's far too late and it would be bordering on hypocritical if you insist on it."**

**"I see that mouth of yours hasn't changed. It's still as sharp as ever. What does your husband say about that? I would hope she's keeping you in check,"**

Chaerin said with a tight smile that made her seem constipated.

**"I'll get to the point then."**

**"I would appreciate if you'd get to the point in this century. In case you forgot, I have a job. I'm not like other women who rely on their rich husband to provide for them praying they die soon so that they inherit their fortune,"**

Jennie retorted, the words dropping from her mouth laced with unconcealed insult and sarcasm.

**"And leave Lisa out of this. I only lash out to people who deserve to be put in their place."**

Chaerin laughed at that but it sounded forced and obviously not out of humor; her ebony eyes shooting daggers at Jennie's dark brown orbs.

**"Speaking of Lisa, how is she doing?"**

Jennie held Chaerin's icy glares unblinkingly.

**"She's fine,"**

she replied but she sensed maliciousness in the way that her stepmother asked about Lisa.

**"Get to the point, Chaerin."**

The older woman leaned back on her leather baronial chair and crossed her arms over her chest in a languid manner as though she has all the time to spare and didn't care about Jennie's own schedule.

**"I heard she's been sick. I hope you took care of her like any loving wife would do."**

**"Yes, she was sick. She's well now. No longer in bed but at work! What the hell are you getting at?"**

Another smile broke on Chaerin's face. It was a smug one. She relished in Jennie's momentary stun over that little revelation about Lisa Manoban.

**"We'll get to that, my dear Jennie,"**

her stepmother said and Jennie nearly cringed at the endearment that didn't sound like one.

**"First, I wanted to remind you of the terms of Ji Yong's will with regards to your marriage."**

**"Remind me?! Is this why you asked me to come here?"**

Jennie scoffed in a high pitched voice gripping the armrest of the chair in annoyance. She drove all the way down here and waited for her just to hear a reminder

**?! "I am living the terms of that will. You arranged everything prior to my marriage. You were there when I got married! Remember?!"**

She thrust her hand forward to show off the wedding band.

**"This is the proof right here! Do you also need to see Lisa's ring?"**

**"Are you really living a married life? Or is it just in paper?"**

**"What?!"**

**"The condition in the will states you be married—meaning an actual marriage not just a simple living arrangement between two people who are married."**

Jennie was sorely tempted to throw something hard and heavy at her stepmother. She couldn't understand what her issues are. Silently telling herself to keep cool, she pushed out a heavy breath and said,

**"Lisa and I are in an actual marriage and as you are well aware, we are also living together. So what in god's name is your problem?!"**

**"Oh it's not my problem actually, Jennie. It's yours,"**

Chaerin declared in a business-like tone, sitting rigidly erect and clasping her bony hands on the glass table.

**"See, what you have with Lisa . . . isn't what I'd call marriage yet and before you start arguing with me, let me just tell you that from what I understand and your father's lawyers agree with me on this, for a marriage to be legally complete and fully valid it has to be consummated through sexual intercourse . . ."**

With a shaky indrawn breath of shock, Jennie clutched at the

armrest tightly until her knuckles turned white. This cannot be happening to her. Chaerin is outwitting her again! She couldn't come up with a rational thought as Chaerin continued to unravel the reason for her being summoned here.

**". . . I have reason to believe that this relationship you have with Lisa Manoban hasn't been gratified yet. I have my sources Jennie and I assure you they are reliable so don't bother denying. But if you insist, we can have you examined by a doctor,"**

Chaerin kept on, well aware that she had gotten Jennie's attention exactly how she wants it.

**"I am only making sure that you are living up to your end of the will. Call it—concern for your well being. I mean, if you do not consummate your marriage in the soonest possible time your inheritance is possibly in danger of being transferred to me."**

**"Wouldn't you just like that,"**

Jennie derided through gritted teeth, doing her best to control her growing rage directed at the witch her father married that was visibly enjoying her predicament.

**"Of course. But you should be thankful I even bothered to remind you. Most stepmothers wouldn't be as considerate with ill mannered stepdaughters."**

Jennie's eyes gazed menacingly at Chaerin and she was slightly pleased when the older woman backed away from the desk seeing the fire in her brown orbs. Then she puckered her face and feigned an apology.

**"Oh I'm soooo sorry, Chaerin. I didn't realize you want to be respected. You see, I was always told that respect is earned and not freely given. How foolish me!"**

Chaerin ignored her.

**"I'm giving you an ultimatum, Jennie. Three days to**

**consummate your marriage or you can forget about ever getting your inheritance."**

**"And how will you know whether it's been consummated or not?!"**

She said out of exasperation, having had enough of Chaerin's undermining tactics.

**"Am I supposed to report back here once it's fulfilled? Or are you assigning someone to document the episode as it happens?"**

Chaerin grinned and tapped her red painted fingernails on the glass table, the sound of it adding more to Jennie's anger.

**"It's all up to you. I don't care. Just as long as you prove it. And also just to let you know, I will be putting up your mother's collection of paintings that's been hanging in the family salon for auction."**

She tensed at the mention of her mother . . . and the paintings. Her mother was a natural artist. She loved to paint in her spare time and her number one fan was her father. He had her works framed and hung in their house for everyone to admire. Those paintings were not only beautiful. They were special and for Chaerin to even consider selling it was like another stab to a fresh wound.

**"It came with the house so legally it's mine but it's foolish of me to keep something I don't care for. Besides it doesn't go well with the new interior of the house . . . unless you want it."**

**"Have it delivered to my house,"**

Jennie told her stonily, shooting deadly glares at her witch of a stepmother.

**"Are we done here?"**

**"For now."**

Jennie jumped up quickly from the chair, grabbed her bag and

strode out of the office without so much as a parting nod to Chaerin. She reached the twentieth floor's elevator right across the reception area and angrily pushed the down button, controlling her raging emotions and the tears that were forming in her eyes.

She didn't want to breakdown and cry in the premises of Chaerin's office so she held it in for as long as she can. Nobody in the building will see her crying. After fifteen minutes which seemed like an eternity, she finally reached the basement parking and got inside her car. She had to get away from this place as fast as she can.

And as soon as she was out on the busy streets, the tears came flowing down like waterfalls, drenching her cheeks and ruining her light make up. She was crying so hard that her vision was getting blurry forcing her to make a stop at the nearest parking space she could find.

All the emotions she felt during her father's death, finding out about the will and her forced marriage came back to her in full force. She swore she would never be caught in Chaerin's traps again but here she is . . . crying, feeling angry at herself for being too complacent and letting her guard down.

The ringing of her phone interrupted her self loathing and she almost jumped in shock at the unexpected sound. She wiped her tears and took gulps of breath before picking up the call, not bothering to see who the caller is.

**"Hello—"**

**"Jen? Is that you?"**

A familiar male voice echoed through the earpiece.

**"You sound different."**

A slow smile spread across her face when she realized who the caller was, swallowing the dryness in her throat and sniffing away the tears.

**"Have you been crying? What's wrong? Tell me."**

Concern was heard in Mino's voice.

**"It's Chaerin,"**

she said, feeling the tears fall again. Angrily, she wiped them with the back of her hand.

**"Get a hold of yourself, Jennie."**

Mino advised her. A long pause followed before he encouraged softly.

**"Tell me why you're crying."**

Leaning her forehead against the steering wheel, she tried her best to follow Mino's suggestion.

**"I'm crying because Chaerin got me again when I least expect it,"**

she began in a strained voice from crying.

**"She's winning. She's taken everything from me and she's still not satisfied. She removed everything in my father's house and in the offices that reminded her of my parents. It's as if they never existed. As if I never existed."**

It was hard not to miss the harsh sigh Mino breathed on the other end which was immediately followed by a colorful string of curses all directed at Chaerin. Then after a moment, he seemed to have calmed down again.

**"I'm sorry I'm never around, Jen. I'm sorry you had to go through all this shit with Chaerin."**

She spoke softly, the tears slowly subsiding.

**"It's okay, Mino. I know what your work entails. I'm just glad you called me today—perfect timing. And thank you for listening."**

**"I should have been there to protect you, comfort you."**

**"Mino don't punish yourself with guilty feelings. I understand."**

Jennie shook her head and with a teary smile, she told him,

**"Besides, I have Lisa now."**

**This is already complete in AFF :)**



## [13] Analyzed

*Who?*

*That's the question of the day.*

*Mino raised the query during their lengthy conversation four hours ago. She had discussed with him every possible scenario that Chaerin could have gotten the information about her marriage.*

*Who gave Chaerin information about her unconsummated marriage? This one still remains unanswered. But whoever that person is, she has to find out soon or her life stands in jeopardy again from Chaerin's conniving mind.*

**"Jen? Are you feeling okay?"**

Sana, her assistant, asked, concerned. The assistant noted Jennie's faraway look as she waited for the rest of the crew to finish setting up the prop for the shoot.

Jennie seems to be pulled back from wherever her mind was to the chaos inside the studio. She gave Sana a perfunctory glance and a smile that didn't quite reach her eyes.

**"Yes . . . yes, I am,"**

she answered in voice that was meant to sound lively but ended up flat.

**"Why wouldn't I be?"**

*Who knows about her marriage being such? A number of people—other than herself, of course there's Lisa, Irene, Patrick and probably to a certain extent, Seulgi.*

Sana scrunched up her face a little, keenly watching Jennie's face and especially her eyes that seem like the brown spheres were looking but not really seeing.

**"I dunno. Um, you seem . . . distracted. Are you sure you're okay?"**

*Taking into account each individual, Jennie immediately discounted Irene, to which Mino agreed to since he also knew the dark haired girl very well.*

*She and Irene weren't called best friends because the word happens to sound cool. The term best friend is something that they experienced and shared for as long as they could remember.*

*Asking Irene about the status of Jennie's marriage would have been a foolish move for her stepmother and Chaerin maybe a lot of things but stupid she's definitely not. And it was also unlikely that Irene got tricked by Chaerin into revealing such fact. Irene wasn't stupid either and she certainly wouldn't have wasted even a second of talking to Chaerin.*

Jennie's thankful for the concern but she really doesn't want to discuss to other people what happened to her earlier.

**"Peachy, Sana. Just peachy or apple-y or grape-y. Hell, throw in any fruit! I'm fruit salad-y!"**

She piped up earning a scared little smile from her assistant. She gave her a reassuring smile then added,

**"I was just thinking about how we can make the next shoot we'll be doing more . . . unique."**

**"Oh."**

Sana nodded slowly but wasn't at all convinced.

**"Yeah. The next one with the futuristic theme."**

*Like herself, Lisa has first-hand information. But she also knows how*

*much she loathes Chaerin. She had explained the situation with Chaerin to her during one of their times spent together . . . times they weren't making out . . . and she was more than understanding and very sympathetic as well.*

*They mutually agreed that for the sake of her inheritance and her being the person who benefited in the business sense from their marriage neither would do anything that could possibly alert Chaerin of the state of their marital affair.*

*Jennie believed her and still does but . . . Mino didn't. And even if Jennie vehemently argued in defense of Lisa, saying that he hasn't even met her husband and therefore doesn't know her personally to be assuming things about her, Mino was dead set on his opinion.*

**"Yeah . . . that one, Sana."**

Jennie responded, looking ahead at the rest of the crew setting up the lights and umbrella around the set.

**"That should be spankin' ...kick ass, awesome."**

*I*

*t could also be Seulgi . . . she is Lisa's best buddy after all and maybe at some point in one of their manly discussions Lisa told her about their situation on the sexual department. Chaerin could have gotten the piece of fact from her without Seulgi knowing it. But the more she considered Seulgi—the happy go lucky, womanizing friend with an I-don't-care attitude—the more she's convinced she's absolutely clueless of whatever is going on with her and Lisa. Yet, if by chance she does know, blame should not be hers alone . . .*

*Mino withheld comment on Seulgi and said, "We can't know for sure. I'll call Irene and maybe she can find out where this girl stands."*

Sana knew it wasn't like Jennie to just sit in one corner letting the crew take care of the props. Jennie always dipped her hands into everything which concerns the shoot and more often than not, she makes last minute changes into the setup of the props. Not this time

though, which reinforced Sana's assumption that something was indeed bothering her boss and friend.

**"Jen?"**

Jennie swung her gaze at Sana.

**"Hmm?"**

*Then, there's Patrick. The old guy knew a lot more than he should and probably because of his age, she wasn't sure if he was keeping what he knew just to himself. He was also rooting, not so subtly she must add, for her and Lisa to get on with the sexual business of the marriage. He was more likely to have spilled out something to Chaerin, intentional or not. But Jennie's mind refuses to wrap itself in the thought of Patrick betraying her like that. She had asked him specifically not to tell Chaerin to which he had agreed and in heart she knows that Patrick is a man of his word.*

**"You are too trusting, Jennie."**

*Mino said after contradicting her belief about Lisa's grandfather.  
"Trusting to a fault."*

**"I'm here . . . you know, if you need to talk or whatever."**

Sana clasped Jennie's hand, her smile giving way to a troubled frown.

**"Your hands are shaking."**

Touched by her concern, Jennie pinned another bright smile.

**"It's arthritis but no need to worry I'm fine,"**

she assured her assistant then added with an attempt at humor,

**"It's gonna be that time of the month soon for me, so you know  
ugh . . . PMS."**

Deciding not to pry anymore since her boss obviously doesn't want



Lisa stopped abruptly causing Jennie to smack straight into her back which earned the Thai woman a light jab of her elbow to her side. Lisa settled a hand on the back of Jennie's neck, drawing her next to her.

**"Afraid of what?"**

The Thai woman asked, amused.

**"Now that I think about it, this is looking like a scene from a suspense thriller kind of movie where the unsuspecting girl gets lured by a hot woman somewhere remote or secluded with no other living soul around and then the hot woman turns out to be a machete wielding murderer!"**

Jennie related in hurried sort of voice as if matching the pacing of such a gory scene playing in her mind.

**"Ahhh! Poor, helpless girl . . . chopped to pieces and thrown out into the river . . . forever lost to society and all because she agreed to go on a date with mentally unstable hot woman."**

**"Thank you for that vivid picture, Nini. While I am flattered by your reference to my hotness, I don't exactly qualify as machete wielding murderer. I don't have split personality or schizophrenic tendencies either and I'm pretty sure I've ever held a machete in my life,"**

Lisa stated with a chuckle, her hand on the brunette's nape sliding down to the small of her back gently pushing Jennie to face the darkness and not her.

**"But you are right about two things . . ."**

**"Which are?"**

**"You're unsuspecting,"**

Lisa blindly reached a hand on the wall to her left and flicked the light switch on.

**"And this is a date."**

The dark room illuminated after a rhythm of blinking Italian FLOS lights overhead. Jennie squinted a little from the sudden glare of lights but once adjusted, she gasped at the sight before her.

Yes, it is a room, a beautiful and classy room. The huge expanse is a plethora of plush and dense chocolate colored wool carpet dotted with several square tables covered in pure white linen and elegantly set up in front of every well cushioned dark wood chair, depending on the seating capacity, are expensive looking array of sterling flatware, wineglasses and plates. The walls are covered with designer wallpapers and luxury silver linen curtains all encased in walnut wood finishing.

**"This is a date."**

Jennie repeated in an awed tone but looking pleasantly surprised. She let her eyes travel across the room which undoubtedly looked like the dining area of a first-class restaurant.

Lisa took in her amazed reaction and couldn't help but smile. Her intention was to surprise her and just by the look of her wide eyes, gaping mouth and speechlessness, she certainly did accomplish to do just that.

But suddenly, a pressing thought seem to have presented itself in Jennie's head making her frown and prompting her to ask,

**"Who owns this place? We're not trespassing, are we?"**

Lisa laughed. She tipped her head and laughed some more, finding the play of expressions on the brunette's face utterly entertaining.

**"Stop it!"**

Jennie ordered, pouting at being laughed at.

**"I asked a perfectly valid question. And I really don't want to be thrown in jail at this time."**

**"Don't worry we have permission from the owners."**

**"Who's the owner?"**

With a girlish grin lifting her chiseled lips, Lisa answered,

**"You're looking at one of them. This is the new restaurant of Manoban Corporation, Nini."**

Jennie's dewy lips formed an O as understanding dawned on her.

**"Wow."**

She breathed, amazement and sincerity evident in it as she strayed her eyes again across the dining area of the upcoming restaurant.

**"This is very, very nice, Lisa."**

"It's still not as finished as it should be but I wanted you to be the first to see the interior. Thank you for the compliment," Lisa said with a slight bow of the head.

**"You're welcome. You deserve it. And also thanks for letting me see this first hand."**

Lisa moved closer to circle her waist with her arm, a smiling gleam in her hazel eyes.

**"Now, about our very first date, Mrs. Manoban . . ."**

Jennie's elegantly shaped brows furrowed a little but Lisa didn't miss the faint smirk on her lips.

**"Oh—I thought showing me an empty restaurant is already the date—but hey, if there's more on the itinerary like maybe food and some drinks, I'm obviously dressed for it!"**

**"Oh there's more,"**

Lisa assured her confidently.

**"But I have to blindfold you until we get there."**

Jennie leaned back from the Thai woman's hold, her face appropriately wary.

**"Uh-oh . . . axe murderer scene again—"**



Earlier, when she picked the brunette up at the studio, Lisa knew she had been crying. It was only because Jennie promised she'll tell her later as to why she was upset that Lisa didn't press further. Even if it doesn't seem forced, her sudden change from gloomy to perky bothered the Thai woman somewhat but she shook her head and chuckled at her extra playfulness.

**"No, it's a blind date,"**

the chestnut-haired woman joked and pulled out a burgundy handkerchief from her pants pocket.

**"Trust me?"**

Jennie studied her face for a couple of seconds before sighing in acceptance.

**"Okay. My life is in your hands."**

**"You are being overly dramatic tonight,"**

Lisa commented, carefully turning her wife's back to her and placing the folded cloth over her eyes, securing the ends behind her head to just the right tightness.

**"I'm just nervous. I've never been on date that required me to be blindfolded."**

**"And there better not be another one . . . unless it's me you're dating."**

Inordinately pleased by the possessiveness of Lisa's tone, Jennie felt herself nodding. Then after hearing a murmured

**"Good."**

from her, she felt Lisa's hands resting on her hips and gently she urged her to step forward.

Jennie willingly followed her husband's directions that she deduced led them to the opposite end of the dining area, up a number of steps, and based on the sudden coolness of the air and the soft wind

blowing against her skin, onto an open space that's probably a balcony or a rooftop garden.

But when Lisa untied the hanky and allowed her to see where they were, Jennie was astounded, more than she was earlier at the dining area.

It wasn't a rooftop but a spacious balcony-like area that will be for waterfront alfresco dining. There are modern resort style outdoor lounge furniture with exquisite detailed cushions, a stage with an elevated DJ booth, a bar and strategically placed small trees that adds to the charm and fresh ambiance of the place.

Yet, what caught Jennie's eye apart from the magnificence of the place was the table in the middle of the entire area obviously set up for a romantic dinner for two. From the corner of her eye, two men dressed as waiters came in, as if on cue, carrying a chilled wine bottle and two plates of beautifully plated food, placing them down on each side of the table before exiting quietly from whence they came.

And then before Jennie could form a thought other than—"

*Lisa planned this for me?"*

—several tiny lights embedded all around the balcony floor and the trees came on adding more to the romantic air.

Jennie swung around to face Lisa who was looking at her with a tender smile. She took in her husband's appearance, dressed in a pinstriped white long sleeved shirt under a less formal dark blue jacket and pants that sit at the hips. Lisa has never been so strikingly beautiful yet handsome in her eyes.

**"You did all this just for our date?"**

**"It's about time we have this date, don't you think?"**

**"Yes—no . . . I mean . . . shit, I don't know what I'm trying to say."**

Lisa smirked.

**"That night at Seulgi's beach house isn't what I'd call a date. And the lunches and dinners we have in the house, doesn't qualify as date either. There are too many servants shuffling around us and to add to that Grandpa is there—we both know he's always bad timing."**

**"This is a wonderful surprise, Lisa."**

Jennie earnestly said, touched that she went to such extent after being sick and amidst her busy schedule to plan this date for her. She temporarily forgot her earlier troubles.

**"Thank you."**

Listlessly, Lisa let her eyes roam over the strapless yellow and black printed dress that ended a little above her knees, affording him an enticing view of her gorgeous shoulders and her toned legs.

**"You can thank me with a kiss,"**

Lisa suggested, voicing aloud what she had been wanting to do since she saw the brunette dressed in the cocktail dress.

Without any objections, Jennie closed the short distance between them gazing directly into her drowning dark hazel pools and Lisa felt her wife's small hands slide up from her chest to twine at her nape, inexorably drawing her face down to her inviting lips.

Tenderly, Jennie brushed her lips over the Thai woman's mouth and a few seconds later she boldly touched her tongue to the latter's lips knowing she liked it that way. Then, she slid her tongue between her barely parted lips, seeking hers.

Lisa went taut. Lisa would have enjoyed letting her control the kissing as a show of thanks but the seductiveness of her actions gave a wave of instant lust surging through her veins and her restraint to be impassive broke like water dam.

With a groan, Lisa's arms tightened around the brunette's waist, lifting her slightly, crushing her to her hardening body. Her hot assailing mouth opened over Jennie's, angling intensely back and forth. The brunette welcomed the plunge of her tongue into her

mouth, kissing her back with passion while Lisa's hands skimmed across her back and down her spine to cup her buttocks, molding her closer against her rigid legs and thighs.

Sometime later, Lisa lifted her mouth from hers and cradled Jennie's flushed face in her hands. Desire was still palpable in her hazel eyes as she gazed down into the brunette's russet ones.

**"If we have to continue with this date, we can't do very much of this . . ."**

Lisa whispered heavily. She would have let her go then but the brunette chose that moment to cast her a knowingly seductive smile that was her undoing.

Lisa unceremoniously claimed her lips again, deepening the kiss, caressing her breast over the silky material of the dress until Jennie's heart was beating in rickety lurches. Then as if realization kicked in once more, Lisa fought to tear her mouth off of hers and settle on resting her jaw against her wife's head while they tried to gain back their steady breathing.

**"You're right,"**

Jennie said in a teasing tone.

**"I would really hate to miss this very first romantic date with my husband."**

So the date went on. It was comfortable, fun, enjoyable and of course romantic. But Lisa had a feeling the romanticism was only because it was Jennie with her. Whether they're getting intimate or simply talking, they just seem to click.

They have been talking, teasing and flirting for two hours and still conversation flowed easily for them. They are never at a loss of topic which didn't come as a surprise to Lisa anymore. Jennie has proven to be an excellent companion. Her quick wit and engaging humor added to an already alluring package that never fails to capture her attention.

She asked questions about the restaurant that still remains unnamed

since the board seem to be taking forever to debate on the proposed names, about where the ideas for such a set up came from and she even admired the color contrast and lighting of the place. Lisa saw the interest in her tone and she appreciated the effort that went into the construction the restaurant, pleasing the Thai woman all the more.

But Lisa noted it was the subject of photography that makes her perk up and become vibrant. Her cheeks grows pink, her eyes dance around and her body language gets animated at the mention of a photo shoot. And Lisa took it all in with enjoyment.

**"What?"**

She asked when Lisa suddenly chuckled.

**"I don't know if you know this or if anyone has pointed this out—but you look turned-on when you're talking about cameras, photos and shoots."**

Jennie blushed but squarely held her husband's gaze.

**"Only you would use that word to describe my excitement for my work!"**

Lisa picked up her glass and smirked as her lips touched the rim.

**"Hey, I'm just an observer here. But I'm finding it very enjoyable looking at you with a turned on face."**

**"Of course,"**

Jennie snorted with an eye roll.

**"My work elates me so I can't help being enlivened or turned-on looking as you call it. I'm good at what I do but my favorite subject would have to be men and women with masculinity in them."**

Lisa suddenly choked on her wine, spilling some on the tablecloth and her half-finished molten chocolate cake.

**"Men and women?"**

Without a thought, Jennie quipped,

**"I'm good with either of the two but men mostly since they're easier to work on."**

**"Nini, you have to clarify that for me,"**

Lisa put in, replacing the wineglass on the table and wiping her lips. Either she's analyzing her too much or she has a very dirty mind.

**"The word men or women in the same line as turned on is not sounding well in my ears."**

Jennie kicked her under the table, making Lisa jump up defensively before sitting up straight.

**"I have a good eye with photographing men and women that exudes charisma. The clothing, the backgrounds, the shadows that flatter the male form to bring out certain qualities like ruggedness and such. It doubles the work to achieve a whole lot of other things with other subjects."**

**"So when you were photographing me . . . you were turned on?"**

The memory of that day at the studio and what happened after came back vividly to her and Jennie could see that was the implication of Lisa's innocent question. In answer, she asked her a question of her own.

**"Were you?"**

**"You know the answer to that."**

**"And . . . now you should also know mine."**

Lisa tensed from where she sat and there was not a hint of smile on her face as her darkening hazel eyes searched Jennie's chocolate ones.



Jennie told her, holding the latter's face steady at eye level. Lisa saw yearning in her eyes and also a trace of nervousness.

Lisa closed her eyes and leaned her forehead to Jennie's. She tried to calm herself from the rush of desire brought on by the brunette's admission during their date. Control has never been a problem for her but right now she's acting like a sex crazed girl! She runs the risk of scaring her wife with her raging lust.

*She's a virgin for crying out loud!*

Doing her best to keep a hold of her brain and keep it working, Lisa suddenly remembered that the chocolate eyed girl had been crying earlier and she still doesn't know what that was about.

**"What happened to you earlier? You said you'd tell me."**

Lisa felt the brunette's body tense but she kept her pressed against the wall, waiting for her to speak. After a lengthy silence, Jennie began haltingly.

**"Chaerin asked me to come to the office to discuss our marriage and my inheritance."**

Lisa pushed away from her and frowned.

**"What about it?"**

In a slow but steady voice, Jennie related what had transpired in Chaerin's office. She told Lisa every bit of ugly detail including the emotions that she felt while in Chaerin's presence and after learning the purpose for the sudden summon.

**"That's why I've been crying before you came."**

Lisa stood a foot away from her with a strange look in her face. The fire that Jennie saw not a minute ago had died down to a soft blue flame. She waited for what she will say. But it never came. Instead Lisa closed the gap between them and her arms looped around her waist until their hips rested lightly against each other.

Then, she lowered soft, warm lips over hers to which she responded



with the same gentle brush of lips. The kiss was unhurried, lazy, definitely comforting her. But when Jennie strained her body closer into hers, Lisa stopped.

**"We shouldn't do this. Not tonight at least."**

**"But—"**

Lisa cut her off. Her hazel eyes were a mask of concern.

**"God knows I want you, Nini. There's no question about that,"**  
she started.

**"But if we have to have sex, I want you willing and ready."**

**"I am."**

**"Yes, you're willing but ready? I don't think so."**

**"I . . . I don't get you at all, Lisa."**

**"You're only willing because Chaerin gave you a timeline. I want to have sex with you, Nini but only if you personally decide that you want to and not out of an ultimatum your most hated person gave you just this morning,"**

Lisa carefully explained, gently stroking the brunette's cheek with her thumb.

**"I don't want you to regret having sex with me."**

Jennie saw the firm set of her jaw even as her voice was gentle and imploring. She wanted to kiss her and slap her across the face at the same time. Instead of jumping at the chance to finally bed her, she becomes all rational and concerned for her wellbeing. Lisa was showing that she really does care for her and she appreciates it.

Yes, she does. It made her heart swell with joy. But along with it was the persistent need she had been feeling for her since four days ago and that surely had nothing to do with Chaerin and the stupid ultimatum.

Explaining that to the Thai woman seems a futile effort. She looked determined to stand by her logic, so Jennie nodded.

**"I understand you, Lisa. And you're probably right to think that, so I respect your decision,"**

she said casually, biting her inner cheek to keep a smile from showing.

**"It's also best if I don't sleep in your room tonight . . . you know, I need to do some serious thinking."**

Lisa was about to object but thought better of it, stepping away from her to let her go on to the opposite side of the hallway.

**"Just for tonight."**

**"Yeah,"**

Jennie answered, but it came out cracky from a smothered giggle so she cleared her throat and tried again,

**"Yeah. Well, goodnight and thanks again for a wonderful evening."**

**"Goodnight,"**

Lisa muttered.

Jennie ambled slowly away from her husband's embrace. When a good distance was between them, Jennie turned to face the Thai woman whom was still staring at her.

**"Lisa?"**

**"Yeah?"**

**"Do you by any chance have a degree in psychology?"**

Lisa looked bewildered by the question

**. "No . . . why?"**

**"Stop analyzing my thoughts,"**

Jennie said laughing softly.

**"What happened this morning in the bathroom—had nothing to do with Chaerin. I wanted that. I wanted a lot more than that actually. I don't know how to convince you and I'm finding our stand on this matter of sex suddenly bizarre since I'm the virgin here not you . . ."**

She relayed in a calm but smiling voice.

**"But if you want proof or whatever, I suggest that you talk to Irene . . . or better yet, try talking to Grandpa. They know how long I've wanted you."**

Having said her piece, Jennie whirled around and walked in quick strides the rest of the way to her room.

She did not wait to see what was her husband's reaction.

## [14] Closer - M!

"

*Kiss me.*

"

It took ten minutes for Lisa to recollect the past four days and realize what she had been ignoring. Then another two minutes to move from her spot in the hallway and follow Jennie into her room, throwing the door open with force that if it weren't stable enough it would have come off the hinges.

Lisa saw her standing by the open glass doors leading out into the balcony, bare footed and staring at the faintly illuminated garden. There was a child-like quality to the way she was looking into the darkness outside with her face tipped up slightly and her shiny curls tumbling over her shoulders and back. She painted a picture of an innocent child who is waiting for a star to fall from the sky so that she can wish on it.

But the innocence ended there.

The body that supported such face is a far cry from being described as

*innocent*

. The silky material of the cocktail dress clung to her inviting curves so perfectly that it seemed surreal to Lisa. She's like a vision that stepped out of a page of a magazine – a seductive vision that will end her torture.

Jennie smiled when she heard the Thai woman's husky voice and her steps muffled by the carpet as she walked closer and closer to where she stood.

Jennie did not turn to acknowledge her. She waited.

**"Kiss me, Nini..."**

Lisa whispered, now standing directly behind Jennie but she made no move to touch the brunette or turn her around to face her.

**"Do you still think this is about my stepmother?"**

Jennie said, briefly closing her eyes at the warmth that was emanating from Lisa's body to hers.

Lisa smiled at that. What her wife said before leaving the dirty-blonde haired woman in the hallway hit the latter like a heavy boulder falling from the sky, jumpstarting her foolish brain. Jennie wanted her. She's ready to take that step with her. She was ready that day Lisa came home sick. She was just too ill to notice the subtle hints the brunette was throwing at her.

*Her grandfather knew!*

The thought bothered her enough to want to have a one-on-one discussion with Patrick but her blood was singing in her veins right now that it doesn't even matter what her grandfather knew that she doesn't.

**"I'm stupid."**

**"And dense,"**

Jennie quipped, nodding in agreement but remained facing the balcony.

**"Terribly dense,"**

Lisa agreed without dispute, pressing a soft kiss to the back of Jennie's head.

**"But you know me well enough to know I will do something to correct that."**

Jennie leaned her back to her, their casted shadows on the carpeted

floor from the light of her lamplight melded into one as Lisa's arms immediately went around her waist.

**"Yes, I do."**

Lisa's lips found her ear and began gently nipping it then she pressed her mouth into the curve of her neck pushing her hair aside to kiss the nape. One hand skimmed up from her waist, over her chest and rested on her cheek to angle her face sideways for their eyes to meet. In a voice that was meant to be tempting, she said,

**"Kiss me, Nini."**

Jennie didn't need to be told again. Within the circle of the Thai woman's arms, she turned around to face her, raised her tempestuous brown eyes to stare at the scorching hazel eyes and laid her slender fingers against Lisa's cheek. Her heart was racing, and an aching need began to throb inside her.

*This is it.*

She wants this. She cares for the Thai woman whose arms are around her. She wants her and from the burning desire in Lisa's eyes, the latter wants her too.

Lisa's gaze had jumped from her mouth to her eyes. Her heart was beating in a strong steady rhythm in anticipation of what was to come. She couldn't believe this is happening. A faint voice in her head was still telling her that this is a figment of her imagination . . . but as she stared into the depths of the brunette eyes, she saw in them the same heady whirl of sensation she was feeling and her willingness to make this their night.

Tipping her toes up, Jennie paused briefly to draw in some air, then subtly touched her lips to the tall woman as if testing the waters of its depth. Feeling, her soft pink lips, teasing her, Lisa unconsciously run her tongue to the brunette's lips and that simple action ignite something inside Jennie. Leaving all control that she has, Jennie pressed her lips firmly against the Thai woman. Their breaths mingled as she brushed her lips over Lisa's mouth, tracing the seam of her plump lips the way the Thai woman would often kiss her.

Lisa's mouth followed her lead and opened to welcome the familiar sweetness. Then, the brunette's tongue slipped into the tall woman's mouth, tasting and exploring, offering what she could.

Lisa eagerly took what her wife offered but she's a hot blooded female whose been denied sex for so long that just the thought of her initiating the first step, willing and ready to be intimate all the way, was making her go crazy. All the pent-up desire, all the hunger and the rampant need she had been feeling for months took over. She responded to the tender kiss with a hard and demanding insistence that made Jennie moan and slip her fingers through her hair, pressing herself closer to Lisa's rigid body.

Just like that, Lisa became in control of the kiss that became ardent and intense in seconds and Jennie, urged by nervousness, anticipation and desire, could do nothing but match it. Lisa's palms found the brunette's butt and pushed her up, expertly adjusted her height to her own while chafing her against the growing bulge inside her pants.

**"I want you. I've dreamed of this so many . . ."**

Lisa murmured against Jennie's parted lips.

The last word was smothered up by the brunette's mouth crashing against hers.

In the next second, Lisa made quick work of her dress, zipping it down deftly until it fell off her body in a soft swish, leaving her naked except for a flimsy black underwear and she lifted her into her arms to carry her to the bed. Lisa sat her near the edge of the mattress but before she joined her, Lisa began to shuck off her clothes.

**"Can I?"**

Came the brunette's soft timid voice, making Lisa's fingers pause at the third button of her shirt.

**"Come here,"**

the Thai woman said in a low voice, smiling mischievously. Jennie

obliged, standing up from the bed. She kept her eyes locked to her husband as she reached to finish unbuttoning her dress shirt, tossing it on the floor as it fell off of her arms.

Jennie's dazed eyes broke contact, dropping to stare at Lisa's exposed upper body. She languidly ran her fingertips up her chest down to her well muscled abs and back again, making Lisa's breathing hitch in her throat. Then, with slightly shaky hands she undid her belt, followed by her pants until she was left with kicking the rest of it off and only in her black and blue woman boxers.

Lisa turned the brunette around so that her bare back was pressed against the former's naked chest. Jennie moaned as her warm skin touched Lisa's, tilting her head as the tip of the Thai woman's tongue wet her neck and she slipped her hands over the soft swell of her chest, teasing her nipples with her thumb and fondling her breast skillfully.

**"I want you . . . so much,"**

Lisa breathed, the tent in her boxers was poking Jennie from behind.

Lisa's lips sought to kiss her mouth and one hand slipped down her stomach where the fingers spread wide as it traveled further south, closing as the Thai woman's thumb hooked to the sides of her lace thong and slithered it down until it fell on its own to her feet where she stepped out of it.

Then before Jennie could recover from the perceptible shiver that ran through her, she was spun around again, feet lifted off the carpet then her back connected with the cool, soft sheet of her bed as Lisa hovered on her knees beside her hip.

Jennie felt a moment of consciousness as Lisa's tantalizing hazel eyes that had darkened to the color of midnight roamed her naked form stretched out on the bed. Her cheeks flushed with trepidation and her mind chose to begin thinking of the imaginary flaws of her body. Lisa had better looking women, curves in all the right places, more—



*Exquisite.*

That was all Lisa could think of. Lying in bed in all her naked glory with her brown locks spread beautifully out on the pillow, the brunette was like inviting a starving fool to a banquet.

And Lisa was that starving fool.

**"Nini—you're so damn beautiful!"**

Lisa murmured gruffly before moving over to her wife to connect their lips in a wildly erotic kiss, erasing all the misplaced insecurities the brunette had been feeling.

Lisa's restless hands skimmed down her body which was followed by her lips dropping kisses everywhere, taking time to taste every bit of exposed skin—Lisa lapped the entire orb of her breast with her skillful tongue until they were peaked to arousal, she buried her face in the warm hollow of her waistline, licked the skin around her navel and down to the triangle of skin above her throbbing core.

Jennie was writhing by the time the Thai woman's hands found her hips, slid smoothly down the backs of her legs to the hollows behind her knees and just as Jennie realized what she was about to do, her legs where propped up over her husband's shoulders and the latter's tongue found her intimately.

**"Lisa . . . ohh . . ."**

The torrent of sensations fired every nerve endings to new life, Jennie's back arched off the bed as she felt her tongue doing wonders to her most sensitive body part. She bucked and moaned but Lisa kept on with the insistent movement of her tongue, never once stopping or lifting her head to cut short the pleasurable torture until the brunette finally shuddered and came.

**"Lisa!"**

After Lisa drew her still quivering limp legs from her weaty shoulders, Lisa quickly flung off her boxers. Crawling over Jennie's panting form, she took her in her arms and felt her tremors slowly subsiding. Lisa reached a hand between their bodies and slipped her

long fingers inside her. She was hot and wet and ready for her but she wanted to make things easy and as much as possible, less painful for her. Lisa moved her fingers along the insides of her slippery flesh, making her quiver to the movement of her hand.

**"You feel so good . . ."**

Jennie felt alive and vulnerable and prurient. She wanted to touch her too and somehow make her feel what she was making her feel right now. She opened her glazed with lust and passionate eyes at Lisa and slowly descended a hand to her stiff erection. She felt her jerk slightly upon contact but she did not let go of her and instead continued to stroke the length of her penis with her hand and fingertip, marveled by its size and how strong it felt in her hand.

Lisa snapped her eyes closed, threw her head back with a low grunt and let her wonderful fingers caress her until the Thai woman thought she would explode.

**"Fuck. Nini . . . stop,"**

Lisa rasped, grabbing Jennie's wrist while she regained her control. When Lisa found her control again, she pinned the brunette's hand over her head.

**"I have to be inside you now."**

Jennie swallowed the dryness in her throat and whispered,

**"Yes . . . please Lisa."**

She sounded desperate, she knew that. She heard herself but she didn't care. She wanted her, her body, to fill the void that she had been missing her whole life. That deep sensual craving of fulfillment that Lisa had awakened that moment they kissed on the night of their wedding.

At last, Lisa positioned herself between Jennie's parted legs, braced both her arms just above her shoulders and with aching gentleness, she slid into her, inch by slow inch, carefully watching her face for any signs of discomfort.

A moment later, Jennie gasped and froze. She went still and so did Lisa.

She was warm and tight, so very, very tight. Her heart was thudding loudly in her chest and her breathing was harsh. Straining to hold back while Lisa gave her time to accustom her body to the fullness of having Lisa's thick rod inside her, her every muscle was tense, desperate.

**"Nini, you alright baby?"**

Lisa asked worriedly, seeing the uneasiness in her wife's eyes.

Jennie nodded and as if to assure her, she drew her face down for an openmouthed kiss. Lisa couldn't take it any longer. Out of need, she plunged in the rest of her. But instantly regretted it when the brunette tightly clutched on her shoulders and cried out in pain.

Lisa withdrew partially but her wife's urgent voice stopped her.

**"Don't!"**

The pain was short lived it would seem and she felt her knees lift up before one leg wrapped around her.

That was all the urging Lisa needed. She moved her length back in, rocking her, easing herself in and out of her in a slow and steady rhythm that was so unlike what she was used to doing while her lips continued to kiss her in the same languid pace as their lower bodies.

Jennie could no longer think. She could only feel—feel her rigid shaft sleekly moving within her, unfolding a mellow glow in the pit of her stomach. As she began to move in tune with her, her body was overwhelmed with an awareness she had not experienced before and she was almost certain, even if it turned out this isn't her first time, still nothing would ever compare to it.

For Lisa, gone were the hazy memories of having sex with her. Just the sight of her wife's gorgeous face, inches from her and glowing with ardor, the increasing cries of pleasure, and the feel of her tight muscles stroking her erection—this is no dream. Her dreams doesn't

even come close to this wonderful reality.

Lisa fought against her control to keep with the slow pace of her thrust. She wanted to prolong their intimacy, relish every sensation floating between them. She wanted this, as her first time, to be special and memorable for Jennie. But her body refused to listen. It refuses to be denied any longer of reaching that satisfaction it so desperately wanted since the night of their wedding.

Yet, she still resisted, moving steadily inside her wife, but the arousing shift of Jennie's body that plunged her deeper inside her and her husky voice calling out her name snapped the fragile thread of control she held. With a loud groan, Lisa tore her mouth away from hers and drove into her full force, thrusting again and again until they became wild with wanting . . .until the brunette was twisting her head in the pillows, her nails digging into the skin of Lisa's back and shoulders, both her legs now wrapped tight around her husband's waist and she was arching her body to meet the Thai woman's forceful thrusts.

Soon enough the small friction that started in her belly began building and growing and gathering momentum until it spread like wildfire along every inch of her, soliciting a scream from Jennie when it shattered beyond her control.

**"Oh god I'm . . . Lisaaa!"**

Jennie's back fell down on the cushions, her heart thundering and her breathing was labored but Lisa wrapped her arms around her, lifting her hips and continued thrusting, wanting to make up for months wasted, months of yearning and come to terms with a startling realization that her feelings for her no longer revolves around friendliness but on something more . . . risky.

Jennie held her, welcomed her renewed thrusts even as she has yet to recover from her staggering orgasm. Before she knew it, Lisa was driving into an unrelenting pace causing her body to convulse again. Her inner muscles clamped around her once more and shortly after they exploded together to new heights, trembling . . . gasping each other's name.

Lisa collapsed against her, and with what little strength left, she rolled onto her back to keep her weight from crushing her, taking her with her. The sound of their heavy breathing filled the room for long, long minutes. Neither was able to speak. With their lower bodies still intimately joined, Lisa let her hand trace the contours of her back, hip and the curve of her butt, basking in the afterglow . . . reveling in the best sex she has ever had.

An eternity later, when rationality came back to Jennie, she realized that not only was the marriage consummated but she in the space of a few hours she had truly become Lisa's wife. And it occurred to her that her relationship with her, uncertain as it is, just went on to a whole different level involving not just her body but her heart as well.

And frankly, she is a little bit scared.

⋆ ⋆

**"Fuck! I can't believe I'm agreeing to this shitty idea,"**

*Irene groaned, annoyed with herself for having a soft heart for Mino.*

**"Come on, Rene."**

*Mino said in an almost caressing voice. "Do it for Jennie. Do it for me."*

**"Count it as a blessing that I am even in your lives,"**

*she retorted but there isn't much anger in her tone anymore. Mino could still easily make her change her mind just like before. "And I want you to understand that I don't like this errand you're sending me to. Kang is sooo . . . ugh! Jennie should be the one confronting her, Mino!"*

**"Rene, you are a wonderful, sparkly blessing to us,"**

*he declared. "Jennie will go soft on this woman named Seulgi. I'm sure of it. She'll believe whatever she tells her. You're it, Rene. She won't be able to sway your head to her liking."*

**"You and your crazy ideas. It's Kang Seulgi, Mino! She has this atrocious idea that she's great and women easily fell for her –"**

**"Rene . . . if I'm there you know I'll do it myself but--"**

**"Yeah, yeah. You're somewhere outside civilization. I keep telling you to visit us here."**

**"I will soon. Just please do this for me and I promise when I get there I will make it up to you and Jennie."**

**"Fine! This ass-faced Chaerin is driving all of us nuts. Jen has been beating herself up over this shit,"**

*she said. She had been shocked as well when Jennie called, wanting nothing more than to murder Chaerin for her evil schemes. The woman is a greedy bitch. Smart and cunning, but a bitch most of all. "I still don't get why Uncle married her."*

*A short pause ensued from Mino's end of the line then he sighed heavily. "Coz' he wanted to forget the pain."*

After receiving the call from Mino and arguing further that she will not go trotting around the streets to find Seulgi Kang to ask her whether or not she had

*talks*

with Chaerin, Irene finds herself in the VIP booth of a nightclub sitting across Manoban's bear-like best friend and sipping her second glass of blue colored drink while waiting for Seulgi to

*bestow*

her of her attention.

She grimaced disgustedly at the bimbo attached to Seulgi's arm who was currently engaged in a liplock with her.

**"Kang!"**

She called over the blare of the music. When that didn't work, she kicked her under the table and banged the surface with the palm of her hand.

**"What the fuck is your deal, Bae?!"**

Seulgi snapped, pulling the redhead bimbo from her lap to rub her lower leg.

**"I think she wants to join us, Seulgi. She does look a little left out over there."**

The girl declared in a grating voice that offended Irene 's ears badly.

**"I don't mind honey. Threesome is always thrilling for me."**

Ignoring the other woman, she threw a death glare at Seulgi and demanded,

**"Get rid of her."**

**"Hey, I was here first!"**

**"And I don't care."**

**"What's your problem?!"**

Seulgi restrained the fired up redhead who jumped out of the seat with her claws stretched out ready to pounce on Irene who sat indifferently eyeing the angry woman.

**"Don't make a scene!"**

Seulgi ordered then ground out in annoyance.

**"Bae has a pole stuck up her ass. That's her problem."**

The girl dissolved in giggles just as irksome as her speaking voice.

**"What?"**

She asked seeing Irene 's blank face.

**"It's funny!"**

**"I'm laughing on the inside."**

**"You can do that?"**

Irene nearly laughed at the seriously curious but dumb question.

**"Can't you? It's a talent I developed over the years. You should practice. It's proven to be a helpful tool when talking to people who use less than half their brain to think."**

**"Hayoung, could you just give us a minute,"**

Seulgi cut in, exasperated with Irene and also curious why the gorgeous woman who wanted nothing to do with her the last time they saw each other had gone out on a limb to meet her in the club.

Redhead Hayoung frowned at Seulgi and without warning slapped her across the face with enough force to rearrange her facial features.

**"It's Sunmi, you idiot!"**

She huffed and immediately left the booth, skimpy clothes and all.

**"Now that—is hilarious!"**

Irene laughed at Seulgi's shocked expression, her hand pressed up against the damaged cheek.

Seulgi threw her an irate glance.

**"I'm glad I can amuse you, Bae."**

**"Me too!"**

**"I'm sure. But you should be playing nice to me."**

Irene raised a perfectly shaped brow and rolled her eyes at her.

**"That'd be the day."**

**"You need something from me or else you wouldn't be hanging here,"**

Seulgi deduced then worked her jaw to ease the sting from the slap.





eyes.

**"There's something on your mind,"**

she stated softly. One thing Lisa didn't want was awkwardness to settle between them after the first time they had sex together.

Jennie showed her a sated smile and in a voice that dropped down to a whisper as if she was confiding an important secret, she said,

**"I'm yours now."**

**"Finally!"**

Lisa retorted with a roguish grin, moving their bodies so that she was fully atop her.

The unexpected sound of Jennie's phone on the bedside table disturbed the onset of cuddling and they both groaned in annoyance. She reached out to answer the call but Lisa grabbed it before she can, looking at the screen to see Irene 's face blinking in time with the ringtone.

**"It's fucking five in the morning,"**

Lisa grumbled irritably before she pressed to answer then heard Irene 's high pitched voice say,

**"Jen! That idiot—"**

**"Irene!"**

Lisa interrupted loudly before the girl from the other line, who was obviously on the edge of hysterics, could start to lengthen the conversation she thought she was having with Jennie.

**"What the—who the—"**

**"Irene, we're busy. Nini will call you back when we're no longer busy,"**

Lisa put in briskly, promptly ended the call and pressed the off

button.

**"She is going to kill you when she lays her eyes on you,"**

Jennie said in between giggles, clutching the sheets up her exposed breasts.

Lisa yanked the sheet from her and rolled her body over hers in place of it, capturing her smiling lips in a quick kiss.

**"If she's smart like I think she is, she'll get what I mean by busy."**

**"Oh, she will. But she'll go on an extensive tirade on how you treated her rudely until your ears bleed and beg her for forgiveness."**

**"If that's what it takes for us not to be interrupted by her this time, I'll take that risk then,"**

Lisa smirked, bending her head again to kiss the smiling brunette beneath her.

Jennie pressed a hand against the Thai woman's chest to halt her obvious actions. Lisa's eyes were beginning to darken and she could feel her penis stirring to life anew.

**"Uh, Lisa . . . again?"**

**"Again."**

Jennie bit her lip and hesitantly said,

**"Um, I can't . . . I want to, Lisa . . . but I'm sore and my thighs are still burning."**

Lisa stilled and silently cursed herself. Damn! She forgot yet again that this is her first time and she had been undeniably rough on her hours earlier. She was out of control!

**"I'm sorry, Nini."**

Lisa amended sincerely, resting her forehead against her wife's.

**"It's just—you're so gorgeous and sexy and we had the most amazing sex—and I'm a bastard."**

**"Nah."**

Jennie contradicted with a smile.

**"You're just being your usual horny self."**

**"Babe, I get horny every time I think of you and that's no joke,"**

Lisa whispered, her lips kissing her temple.

**"Only when you think of me?"**

Lisa's forehead creased at the doubt in her tone but she shook the thought and regarded it as another one of her teasing remarks.

**"Just you."**

Jennie seemed pleased to hear her husband's assurance, remaining quiet in her arms for a few minutes before she said,

**"I can't believe we did it in my room and not yours."**

Lisa's lips twitched with laughter at her wide-eyed stare.

**"It's better here and Grandpa won't disturb us like he does when we're in my room. He thinks that's an extension of the guest room."**

**"That's true,"**

the brunette agreed, smiling softly.

**"Which reminds me . . . we will have to remedy this two bedroom thing we have right now."**

**"We do?"**

Bracing her arms on the mattress, Lisa gave her an assessing look

then after a minute a smirk showed on her lips. Suddenly, she rolled her body so that she was now pinning her again with her weight.

**"Yes, we do."**

She said then swiftly her lips and tongue swooped down on her wife, engaging her mouth in an outright intense kiss as her hips undulated suggestively against her lower body.

Faintly grasping that she was kissing her senseless to convince her of her idea, Jennie moaned low in her throat.

**"Mmm-hmm, Lisa . . . how?"**

Lisa stopped, smiled handsomely and averred.

**"One ridiculously spacious married couple bedroom."**

**"I have no say in this matter, huh?"**

Lisa winked.

**"The plans are already in my desk."**

Jennie couldn't help but giggle at her husband's incorrigible nature but just as she was about to retort a flippant remark, she suddenly yawned.

**"God, I'm so tired."**

That made Lisa smile.

**"Poor baby,"**

she ribbed, shifting their bodies so that Jennie's head lay on her arm and one leg draped over her thigh.

**"We'll have to remedy that too."**

**"Yeah, sleep is good."**

**"Not what I have in mind but for now it'll do."**

Jennie lifted her head up.

**"What?"**

**"Stamina takes practice, babe."**

Lisa said in a mock serious tone then her lips spread wide in a mischievous grin.

**"Lots and lots and lots of it."**

## [15] Interlude

It was twelve in the afternoon, exactly seven hours after Irene's early morning call.

**"Are you sure you heard her right?"**

Lisa asked skeptically as she and Jennie stepped inside the apartment building where Irene lives.

Lisa's original plan before she dozed off with Jennie that morning was to spend the day in the house, in her room, in bed and doing what married couples do.

After an amazing night with Jennie which meant an important change in their current relationship, Lisa felt it necessary was to be with her and enjoy the new level of their bond. Plus, she really didn't feel like leaving her wife just yet. How could she? Jennie was naked gorgeousness sprawled out on the bed next to her and she's a woman who just had sex with her, felt how incredible they were together and naturally she badly wants a repeat of that.

To add to that, Lisa really does care for her wife more than what she's willing to admit.

But Irene just had to ruin the day by calling on the house phone at around ten o'clock, thirty minutes after she and Jennie woke up and was having an intense make out session that would have surely lead to sex had it not been for Irene screaming her head off at Seungri, the butler who answered her call, and demanding that the phone be delivered at once to Jennie because her troubles qualify as a life and death situation.

So the butler just about ran all the way up the grand staircase like fire was burning his tail, phone in hand and a harassed expression on his face, as he went from room to room after finding her bedroom empty.

He created such a ruckus that her grandfather, naturally nosy that he is, involved himself in the matter along with three other house staff and actually helped to find them. And they did . . . they found them while engaged in a wild lip lock and just a few seconds short of consummating the marriage again.

She nearly had a heart attack when the door banged open and five heads, crammed between the door frame and poked inside. Four gasped loud enough to be heard through the entire floor and their faces showed varying degrees of shock and delight while Patrick's face gradually went from frowning to a full on smirk nodding his head approvingly at the naked pair on the bed.

Jennie automatically grabbed the sheets clumped beside her hip that had slipped down their bodies during the supposed foreplay and quickly flung it over them to cover their nakedness. She buried her head in the crook of Lisa's neck and made a sniveling sound of embarrassment.

**"Get out!"**

*Lisa had shouted angrily, wrapping her arms around Jennie in a protective manner making sure she was fully covered. "Get the fuck out!"*

*The fury in Lisa's voice wasn't mistaken for anything else by the servants. They immediately straightened and scurried away from the open doorway, holding their breaths in check lest their master threatens to fire them. But Patrick remained where he was completely unaffected by the anger in Lisa's tone and the murderous look directed at him.*

**"Don't give me that look Lisa Manoban,"**

*Patrick admonished, sounding appropriately serious but the smile on his face never waned one bit. "I owned that look when I was your age."*

**"Go away!"**

*Lisa yelled again rolling her body along with Jennie so that the blanket wrapped around them securely and she shielded her from the open door where Patrick was. "Do I have to explain what the hell we're doing here for you to get that we need privacy?!"*



*Patrick sniggered suddenly and in a low voice said something that Lisa swore sounded like 'Coitus interruptus' before he stated aloud, "Oh I know what you're doing. No need to elaborate I can see it clearly from here."*

**"Isn't this what you've been rooting for since you came here?! But here you are disturbing us again! God, Grandpa!"**

**"And how many times do I have to tell you to lock your door? Clearly, you never listen."**

**"Grandpa,"**

*Jennie timidly voiced out from behind Lisa before the latter could retort back to Patrick. She seemed calmer than she was but her face was still flushed. "Why were you looking for us?"*

**"You have a phone call actually from a certain—"**

*He tried to recall but couldn't so he spoke on the phone instead to ask, "What's your name again?—Irene?—You sure? Really? First time I've heard such beautiful name. Me? I'm Lisa's grandfather. Call me Patrick. Yes, they're here. They've been busy that's why . . . yes, that kind of busy. Now, now, no need to scream. Eardrums get sensitive with age—okay I'm giving the phone to them now." Patrick tossed the phone over in the direction of the bed and Lisa easily caught it. "She's demanding to talk to you." He addressed Jennie. "That friend of yours has a way with words. Seungri was verbally attacked when he told her you were still asleep. It seems like an emergency."*

*Handing the phone to a mortified Jennie, Lisa cursed inwardly at the never ending interruptions that come their way. She should have known the brunette's best friend would not take it well-being hung up on earlier when she called. And she certainly didn't think that four servants and her grandfather would enter the room, without so much as a warning then, accidentally witness part of their sexual activities.*

*When Lisa looked up and saw Patrick still hovering by the door, she shot him a look that clearly said he should leave but the old man was either oblivious to it or he simply doesn't care. Instead he continued smiling at Lisa while playing with the handle of his cane then relayed, "I'm glad*

*you finally saw the light."*

**"Please get out now, Grandpa."**

*Lisa sat up and braced her elbows on her bent knees as the palm of her hands pressed against her temples. She wasn't seeing the humor in their situation right now. She looked exasperated. "You standing there while we're here naked is starting to get a tad creepy."*

*Patrick's shoulder's shook with mirth but he did make the move to leave. "Belated happy honeymoon," he said as a parting word, closing the door as he went.*

**"Yes, I'm sure."**

Jennie replied as the elevator doors closed and started moving up to the penthouse floor.

**"Irene said a lot of things but I kinda went into shock after she said Seulgi is with her that I barely recall the rest of her rants."**

Lisa casually draped her arm over her shoulders.

**"This is odd. How did Seulgi end up in her place? Last time I checked, your best friend hates my best friend."**

**"Do you think they hooked up like . . . we did last night?"**

Jennie sounded quite appalled by the thought and it showed on her face, gazing up at Lisa wide eyed and lips curled unevenly.

**"That's a damn bizarre coincidence, don't you think?"**

Lisa echoed, shooting Jennie a weirded out glance.

**"I know they're our best friends but do we all have to do the same thing at the same time? I mean, come on!"**

**"I know, Lisa, but Seulgi is with her!"**

**"I know. But please don't compare what we did to whatever they were doing."**

**"I'm not—it's just a thought and it's possible!"**

Lisa shook her head adamantly, drawing the brunette against her chest.

**"Last night was incredible, Nini."**

She whispered to her ear.

**"If it weren't for this damn disruption we'd be having a continuation of it."**

Jennie giggled, looping her arms around the Thai woman's neck and nuzzled her nose to hers.

**"Lisa, you've been telling me that since we left the house."**

**"Don't you want a replay?"**

Her husband's brows rose and fell as if daring her to deny that she wasn't hoping for the same.

Jennie watched her face slowly closing the gap to hers knowing that a kiss would soon follow their little flirting.

**"You know I do,"**

she admitted softly.

**"Good answer."**

Lisa murmured before her lips crashed down on hers in a thorough kiss that sent her senses reeling crazily, forgetting that they are in an express elevator that will open at Irene's penthouse.

The soft ding to signal the elevator doors opening was not heard by the couple as they seem to be lost in the kiss. Neither did they see Irene already standing there with her arms crossed over her chest and a pinched expression to her face.

**"Haven't you had enough sucking last night?!"**

She clamored in a disbelieving tone instantly alerting the pair of her

presence and making them pull apart with a bit of disconcertion.

**"Took you long enough to get here even after I said to hurry! I know I was perfectly clear about you two leaving testosterone and hormone in your house before coming here!"**

**"Irene—"**

Lisa was the first to speak as they walked out of the elevator and into the penthouse looking around the spacious and well-designed floor to see any sign of Seulgi but the small girl wasn't planning on letting her speak.

She raised an impatient hand at Lisa halting whatever she intended to say and began pacing back and forth in front of the pair who followed her movements with their eyes.

She suddenly halted directly at Lisa and narrowed her eyes at her. The closeness of her face unsettled Lisa a bit that she instinctively took a step back to put some space between them and she threw Jennie a harried glance.

**"Rene, no need to be violent. We're here now,"**

Jennie piped in hoping to get her best friend to calm down and tell them what she had been raving mad about since this morning that concerned Seulgi.

Irene whipped her head abruptly at Jennie that sent her hair swinging over her face.

**"You'll have your turn later."**

She forewarned then swung back at Lisa.

**"Manoban, don't you ever, ever—I mean, ever—"**

**"Ever."**

Lisa quipped, grinning.

**"Got it."**

**"Oh you think this is funny, don't you . . . woman-who-finally-got-laid? She finally allows you to dock in her port and you go smart ass on me?"**

Lisa raised both arms in surrender, keeping her mouth shut to let the agitated woman have her moment of fury and hopefully get to the part where she actually tells them what her problem really is.

**"Don't think so,"**

Irene retorted.

**"If you ever so much as think about hanging up on me again—"**

**"I won't do it again, Irene. I swear."**

Lisa cheekily promised, unable to resist cutting off her speech to speed things up a bit. Jennie tugged at her hand, imperceptibly telling her to stop annoying her best friend more.

Irene straightened, crossed her arms again and eyed Lisa for a couple of seconds then in a surprisingly less high pitched voice, she said,

**"Alright, Manoban. Since you seem to be having a blast disrupting my sentences let me ask you this—before last night, did you tell your thick faced friend about your non-existent sex life with Jennie?"**

**"What?!"**

Lisa and Jennie exclaimed in unison, a play of disbelief and shock crossing their faces at the completely off topic question.

**"Irene!"**

Jennie scolded as soon as she recovered from what came out of her friend's mouth.

**"What drugs are you on?!"**

**"Where the hell is Seulgi?"**

Lisa demanded, directing a menacing glare at Irene who glared back icily.

**"Your friend is an idiot."**

**"Yet she's here in your place. You must like idiots."**

**"Hardly. My conscience won over dislike."**

Jennie butted in.

**"Stop it! This is pointless."**

**"I need an answer, Manoban. Did you or did you not?"**

Lisa gritted her teeth to keep her temper in check and replied bitinglly,

**"I don't get the relevance of the question, Bae, but believe it or not, I don't discuss my sex life to Seulgi or to the next available ear who suddenly wants to hear a good bedtime story."**

Contrary to what Lisa was expecting Irene to do, the agitated woman cocked her head to one side as if weighing whether or not the tall girl's claims have truth to it. Then, she poised herself up again and the hostility on her face vanished.

**"Okay, that's all I need to know."**

**"That's all?"**

Lisa repeated, dumbfounded by the abrupt change in Irene's demeanor.

She nodded.

**"Yeah."**

Then whirled away from her, striding towards the living room.

**"I'm confused,"**

Jennie interjected following in her friend's wake and dragging Lisa

along

**. "I thought you said Seulgi is here and you want Lisa to get her out because she's physically unable to move."**

She stopped next to a purple frilly couch and sat herself on it.

**"Kang is in the guest room,"**

Irene replied with visible exasperation pointing to the direction of the room.

**"She's passed out."**

**"Passed out? How is she passed out?"**

Lisa asked.

**"Seulgi can hold her head even when disgustingly drunk. Why were you with her? And you had to bring her here?"**

Irene rolled her eyes in edginess.

**"We met up at the club. She forced me to dance with her coz' allegedly I'm responsible for her being dateless. So, we ended up dancing. After that, I was getting nowhere with her and the place was packed, we got separated and next I find her totally drunk, falling off the bar stool and in danger of getting trampled by a crowd with very deadly stilettos,"**

she explained without pausing for air, oblivious to the fact that Lisa was having a hard time following her rapid fire sentences.

Lisa shook her head to clear it.

**"What? Why did you two have to meet?"**

**"Manoban, keep up with the pace will you? I wanted to ask her if she had talked to Lee Chaerin about you and Jen's sex life. Oh don't you dare glower at me! It's possible that Lee got the info from her. I'm being a concerned friend here,"**

Irene retorted, defensively indignant, then after dispelling a heavy breath continued on like she was never annoyed.

**"I would have left her there but apparently I still have an angel on my shoulder that told me to help your poor friend out. So I did. Only when I was trying to knock some sense into her, I realized she wasn't just drunk to the point of being wasted. She couldn't open her eyes, didn't have the strength to pick herself up and she couldn't even talk. She looked like a woman who got a heaping doze of GHB and Rohypnol."**

**"Are you saying she was drugged?"**

Jennie asked since Lisa was still at a point of processing Irene's story.

**"Yes that's what I'm saying! Geez, Jennie, did you leave your intelligence in bed?"**

**"GHB and Rohypnol are date rape drugs,"**

Lisa expressed finally catching up and fleetingly forgetting her irritation directed at Jennie's small best friend.

**"Date rape drug on Seulgi? That just doesn't connect."**

**"Well done, Manoban!"**

Irene rejoined with sarcasm, giving her three hand claps.

**"I'm only assuming it's that drug but whatever it is, I don't care if it connects or not. When I found her, she was like a dead person—only breathing! Someone is either playing a terrible prank on her or this person means business. She's in a much better state now but she's still pretty much a wreck,"**

she waved an arm toward the door of the room Seulgi was in.

**"See for yourself."**

**"This is unbelievable,"**



Jennie murmured, running a hand through her hair. She glanced at Lisa and saw the same reaction from her.

**"Yeah, I can't believe I became savior then nanny in one night and to Kang no less while you two were getting hot and heavy and totally ignored my call."**

**"Do you have to keep bringing that up?"**

**"Apparently not . . . you two look sexed up enough as it is,"**

Irene drolly said then she turned to Lisa.

**"Will you go and get your friend already? I'm done being her nanny."**

Lisa could not decide if she should be infuriated or thankful to Irene. Her purpose for meeting with Seulgi got on her nerves. She didn't like the fact that she took matters into her own hands without even telling her or Jennie of her plans. But conversely, she realized, Irene acted out of loyalty and friendship. She couldn't blame her for that and she did save Seulgi from injuring herself in the drugged state she was in.

**"Thanks for, uhh—the angel on your shoulder,"**

Lisa said uneasily. The annoyance was overshadowed by gratefulness.

**"Yeah, whatever. I'll send the message."**

When Lisa disappeared inside the guest room, Irene jumped up from the couch and pulled Jennie none too gently towards her own room. Once inside, she closed the door shut and stood against it. She gave Jennie a once over from the top of her head to the tips of her dark polished toes peeking out of a pair of strappy sandals.

**"Did Mino tell you to meet up with Seulgi?"**

Jennie asked when Irene gave no inclination to speak and simply contend herself with assessing her look.

**"I told him to drop the idea."**

**"Yeah."**

She raised a meaningful brow.

**"And how did that go? Thrilling enough?"**

**"I'm lacking in sleep just like you but not for the same reason obviously."**

Jennie groaned stomping over to Irene's bed and sitting on the purple mattress.

**"I had sex last night alright! I know it. You know it and the entire staff in the mansion probably knows it by now. I'm sorry you had to go through all that trouble to get information from Seulgi for nothing. I'm sorry Lisa hung up on you when you called. I'm sorry—"**

**"The sex—your first time—how was it?"**

For a second, having been interrupted with her apology, Jennie was confused by the sudden question.

**"You're seriously asking me that?"**

**"Not serious enough to require an ambulance but yes, I'm serious."**

Jennie saw Irene's lips twitching into a smile that was nowhere near annoyed or possibly blaming Jennie for the crappy night she had with Seulgi.

**"You're crazy."**

**"No, just curious. How was it?"**

She laughed softly as Irene pushed away from the door to sit next to her on the bed.

**"It was . . ."**

She began, blushing as the memories of last night came flooding in—the passionate kisses, wonderful hands, the gentleness and the intensity of their joining—

**"Amazing."**

**"Lisa Manoban does live up to her reputation after all. You look like you're about to cum."**

**"You spend a few hours dancing with Seulgi and suddenly your mouth is so vulgar!"**

**"You're no longer a resident of virgin land, Jennie. Quit being coy."**

Irene reminded, crossing her legs.

**"You wanted what happened, right?"**

**"I wasn't forced into it, if that's what you mean. You know I wanted it."**

**"Sex just complicated your already complicated relationship with her. You crossed the line and there's no going back. This is a big step for you, Jen. I know you did not just decide this out of uncontrolled desire—you feel something for her, don't you?"**

Jennie sighed and slumped back on the bed. She closed her eyes and began considering the question. She cares for Lisa that's for sure. But her decision to have sex with her isn't only because she cares. It wasn't just out of lust either. It's something more complex than that.

**"Is it love?"**

She opened her eyes and shifted her body sideways to better see Irene's face.

**"If you mean love as in like the one you feel for Mino, then no."**

She answered, biting back a smile at the sudden flush in Irene's face

when she mentioned Mino.

**"What comes after caring but right before love?"**

**"Passion."**

**"Well, yeah . . . I guess that's what I feel."**

**"And Lust. Don't forget lust, Jen."**

Irene grinned at Jennie who just rolled her eyes at her.

**"Fine. Passion and Lust."**

**"Question is, will it stay as passion and lust or become more than passion and lust? Coz' right now you're doing the opposite of what you swore you won't do with Manoban but your marriage is still under the terms of the will."**

**"I—"**

For lack of anything to say and accepting that everything Irene pointed out regarding her relationship with Lisa has truth in it, Jennie shrugged. She knows Lisa cares for her but that's all. She's been extra attentive, thoughtful, affectionate to a certain extent and she could go on and on but she's unsure if anything will change because of last night.

Irene seemed to understand her best friend's lack of response. She did not pursue the subject any further but asked instead,

**"Am I really that obvious with Mino?"**

Jennie chuckled, reaching for Irene's hand that rested idly on the mattress and gently squeezed it.

**"No, Rene. You're never obvious unless you do it on purpose. I'm your best friend. Best friends know things like this. They see what others don't. Besides you did confide to me freshman year that you love him. You hated every girl he dated and you cried the most when he went away for college."**

**"After all these years, he still thinks of me as a sister. He's completely clueless."**

**"But you love him anyway. Instead of being sisterly you should be obvious with him and maybe he'll come around. He's still single and you're single."**

**"Sure he will—when he's not saving the world from poverty, malnutrition, aids or whatever."**

Irene exhaled noisily then as if she's had enough dwelling on emotions she changed the subject back to Jennie.

**"So how are you gonna prove to your evil step mother that you and Manoban finally got your groove on? That woman is fucking insane! She wants proof—eww!"**

**"She's messed up,"**

Jennie reinforced, knowing that Irene isn't always comfortable talking about her unreciprocated feelings for Mino.

**"I have no idea how I'm going to prove I had sex with Lisa. I should be thinking of a way but I can't seem to get myself to think about that right now."**

Irene cracked up in sudden merriment. "Normally you'd be all worked up on this problem with Chaerin," she paused to let the laughter pan out.

**"Yesterday you were crying your eyes out and choking on your tears but here you are now looking almost unconcerned. I'm gonna make a wild guess and say you're thinking of . . . tonight, Lisa Manoban and sex!"**

**"I'm that obvious?"**

Jennie asked looking a bit stunned that Irene got everything right on the dot.

**"It doesn't take a genius to see what's written all over your smiling face, Jen. But don't worry, Manoban is in the same**

**boat as you,"**

Irene assured patting Jennie's knee to placate her alarm.

**"But before your thoughts jump from sex to having babies with Manoban, worry about Chaerin first coz you know your inheritance is at stake."**

Jennie suddenly bolted upright from the bed. She grasped Irene's upper arms and opened her mouth to speak but nothing came out. Her jaw hung low and her eyes grew into big round saucers, filled with panic.

**"What?! You're scaring me,"**

Irene said, confused.

**"Speak up!"**

**"We didn't use protection last night,"**

Jennie whispered on a strangled breath.

**"So? She's your hus—oh—oh! Uh-oh babies. Not good. I mean, babies are good but right now, in your case, it's bad! Sex is complicated but babies are double the complication."**

**"I know!"**

Releasing her grip on Irene, she scrambled up from the bed and began pacing, silently berating herself for being so horny to the point of negligence.

**"I need to see a doctor right now."**

**"Want me to come?"**

**"Yes!"**

By the time they came out of Irene's room, Lisa was also coming out of the guest room supporting a weary looking Seulgi to walk. She looked up, adjusting Seulgi's arm over her shoulder and pulled her

to stand straight. Seulgi is definitely heavy. Lisa had to give props to the slim and small woman for the means she used to haul Seulgi out of the club to her place.

**"Please tell me you had help bringing her here last night. She's like a dead weight,"**

Lisa complained circling her arm around Seulgi's waist since she was slipping again. Seulgi gave a low groan of protest.

**"Duh. I'm not exactly keen on breaking a nail or some other important body part,"**

Irene replied bluntly.

Lisa shook her head and turned her attention to Jennie who had come up to Seulgi's other side and was helping bear the weight to get them moving towards the elevator where Irene waited, not shy about showing her impatience.

**"I'll come back for you here after I get this one settled,"**

she told Jennie.

**"No!"**

Jennie quipped, her tone hiking up a few notches. It made Lisa frown and notice the distracted look on her face but she shot her a bright smile and repeated in a calmer voice,

**"No, Lisa. It's alright. I have some paperwork to finish in the studio and I have to get my car there. Irene will give me a ride. I'll just see you at home, okay?"**

**"Okay."**

Lisa slowly nodded, still in doubt but she didn't argue.

**"Relax, Manoban. A few hours won't kill you. You've got all night and the rest of the five years with her to be merry in bed or wherever,"**

Irene glibly interjected which earned her a death glare from Jennie.

A few warning bells sounded inside Lisa's head when the time frame of their marriage was mentioned but she was in no mood to engage in another debate with Irene while Seulgi was weighing her down.

**"Are you always this eloquent with words?"**

**"Where am I?"**

Seulgi suddenly spoke. Her words slurred. Her eyes half open.

Irene answered the still drunken girl.

**"You're on Mars with two horny aliens holding you up."**

**A/N:**



## [16] Resolved - M!

Lisa stared at her wife from across the kitchen entryway as she engaged in conversation with Mrs. Song and her grandfather. She had been standing there for a good eight minutes just looking at Jennie seated on the granite countertop next to the refrigerator.

She wore an oversized asymmetrical fuchsia cotton shirt that bared one deliciously tan shoulder, paired over a short denim skirt with jagged edging. Her hands were planted firmly on the countertop on either side of her hips, her shapely legs were crossed by the ankle and she was unconsciously swinging them while she listened intently to whatever the cook was saying.

The past few hours after they parted ways in Irene's apartment building felt like it's been stretched into days. Lisa was practically praying to the god of time—well, she had hoped there is one because she's never been one to pray or believe in divine intervention—to speed up the seconds so that she can leave Seulgi without feeling like a good for nothing best friend and rush home to Jennie to enjoy their newfound intimacy with hopefully no more interference.

But as it turned out, the god of time—if there is one—does not listen to non-believers such as herself when they suddenly resort to prayers to make things go their way. Seulgi was nowhere near getting better even after she got her settled in her own apartment. In fact, she became worse. Seulgi threw up just as she was about to leave which she instantly took as a bad sign health-wise and out of worry, she was left with no other option but to bring her to a doctor.

So Lisa drove Seulgi to the local hospital where one wing housed several clinics of doctors with varying specialties. She brought her in to be thoroughly examined since she doesn't really have a clue to what caused her best friends' current state of grogginess aside from what Irene told her—and her claim was close to outlandish that she

was having doubts about the truthfulness of her accounts.

The lust surging in her veins for Jennie had to wait for the sake of a long time friendship. And she knew Jennie would definitely be disappointed or probably get mad at her if she just left Seulgi like that. Even Irene who never fails to express her dislike for Seulgi went out of her way to help her friend so naturally she, being the best friend, should take the extra effort to make sure Seulgi is left in a better condition.

Following medical procedures for the check-up meant waiting and waiting plus another hour or so . . . waiting for the results of the laboratory tests done on Seulgi. She had been waiting for so long that she was convinced there is indeed a god in charge of time and this god either hates her with a passion or it happens to be a fan of comedy since he's pulling quite a prank on Lisa by making her sit and wait longer than what she expected.

A crack of laughter from the three other occupants of the kitchen brought Lisa's musings to an end and she realized that her grandfather was animatedly retelling a story to an amused Jennie while Mrs. Song seem to be inputting some minor details to the old man's tale.

**"She did that when she was only six?"**

Jennie's hands flew to her cheeks seemingly shocked by Patrick's story.

Mrs. Song rejoined.

**"Six and a half but I think the curiosity started at five."**

A soft smile appeared on Lisa's face when she saw Jennie's eyes narrow and her nose scrunched up as if she's in doubt of Mrs. Song's words. She never ceases to entertain her with the facial expressions she manages to show depending on her mood. She can look like a four-year-old one moment whose been denied a favorite toy thus finding solace in pouting then a vixen the next that can seduce a huge number of the male population even without trying.

Quite obviously, she's included in that male population that she's unconsciously seducing . . . especially now that she's still riding on last nights' intense sexual high.

Clothed or unclothed, she has a body that unquestionably invited any man and woman's hand to touch it, a pair of russet eyes that mirror an amazing display of naiveté and playfulness but could ignite desire to any straight guys and gays that happens to stare back. And her lips—dewy, soft, perfectly shaped—she will never get tired of feeling it against her own.

Patrick nodded chuckling at the memory.

**"She's always been curious of the female species even though she's also one. Maybe because, she was special for having a male reproductive organ that still made her curious on the female population and you know what the funny thing is? My wife was there when the curiosity struck up that day. She ended up getting ear pinched for attempting to peek under a girl's skirt."**

Lisa instantly comprehended that her grandfather was telling Jennie one of her naughty childhood days. She straightened from the wall she was leaning against, feeling suddenly indignant and wanting to confront Patrick for narrating her errant behavior as a child to Jennie.

The small movement alerted Mrs. Song of her presence and before Lisa could move another muscle, she called out to her.

**"Lisa! We were just talking about you."**

**"I heard the gist of it, Mrs. Song."**

Lisa drawled shaking her head at the two seniors in mild annoyance before her vision zoomed in on her wife Jennie.

Chocolate eyes raised and locked to the hazel ones. They held their gazes unblinkingly for some minutes in a silent greeting while the two older people in the room seated between the counter Jennie was perched on and the entryway where Lisa was swung their

heads in both directions waiting for either to speak first.

But the couple seems to be content just staring, communicating with their eyes the things that they can't say with words. There was a spark of delight in both their eyes the moment their gazes met, coupled with a hint of knowing mischief and some other vibe that only they could understand.

And of course, there's the very apparent air of longing and desire which is slightly more pronounced in Lisa's piercing dark hazel eyes than in Jennie's chocolate orbs.

After a while, Lisa took a step inside the kitchen to get to Jennie but she never once tore her gaze from her in the short walk covering the distance that separated them. When she was close enough, she stood directly in front of her, wrapped her arms possessively around the brunette's waist while hers draped over Lisa's shoulders then the Thai woman finally uttered a quiet greeting,

**"Hi, Mrs. Manoban."**

The small smile that tugged at the corners of Jennie's lips widened and she whispered in response,

**"Hi."**

Lisa nuzzled their noses lazily, forgetting the presence of her grandfather and the cook that was thoroughly enjoying their show of affection.

**"Miss me?"**

**"Yup,"**

Jennie nodded, her fingers unconsciously playing with the ends of her hair that rested on her nape.

**"You?"**

Lisa grinned then pressed her lips to the brunette briefly.

**"Hell yeah."**

**"How's Seulgi?"**

**"Much better."**

**"That's good but someone has to be with her while she's recovering."**

**"I called her sister. She's with her as we speak."**

A deliberate cough cut through their moment then Patrick's voice said,

**"We're going. It's obvious we're not wanted."**

It was followed by a shuffling sound, a door swinging as Mrs. Song headed off and the click of the cane hitting the tiled floor.

Without moving from the position she was in, Lisa addressed her grandfather offhandedly,

**"You're not wanted."**

Jennie slapped her shoulders lightly but other than that, she didn't move in Lisa's embrace either.

**"Grandpa told me a lot about your childhood adventures."**

**"That's why he's not wanted."**

Patrick surprisingly did not retort back to Lisa's pointed remark instead he laughed good-naturedly and ambled to exit the kitchen. Before he showed himself out, he paused by the door and looked at the couple who were back in their own little world talking in hushed tones and had zoned out the rest of their surroundings.

He smiled approvingly at the two. And for the first time in a long time, he felt very, very good about what the future will bring.

**"Did you finish the paperwork?"**

Lisa asked when she sensed her grandfather had gone.

Jennie's brows curled in uncertainty and she pulled back slightly

from the Thai woman's hold.

**"What paperwork?"**

**"Paperwork in the studio,"**

Lisa answered, keeping a straight face when her eyes grew in alarm as it dawned on her what the tall girl was talking about.

**"Oh!"**

Jennie breathed, hastily covering up her sudden tension with a wide smile.

**"Um, yeah. I did. It's finished."**

**"Really?"**

**"Yeah!"**

She nodded vigorously in an effort to convince Lisa of something she didn't do.

Lisa had to hold back a cackle at her futile attempt, enjoying her discomfort in trying to hold a steady gaze. If she hadn't brought Seulgi in to see a doctor and waited for hours for the results, she might have not learned that she went on a trip to the doctor as well.

Coincidentally, the gynecologist she went to was in the same building as Seulgi's doctor. When she emerged from the clinic holding a prescription and discussing it with Irene along the waiting area, she understood why she was there in the first place.

**"So what did Irene mean when she said—"**

Lisa paused recalling what She overheard the blond girl say earlier to Jennie.

**"Y**

*ou don't have anything worry to about anymore. The doctor said she gave you the extra strength stuff...proven effective for squashing*

*hyperactive fishes swimming in water."*

Jennie's jaw dropped in shock then closed after a few seconds when she found her voice. Those were the exact words Irene told her in the clinic.

**"How do—you were there?!"**

**"Yep. Three doors away from your gynecologist."**

Lisa revealed with a sly grin.

**"But next time tell Irene to speak in a low voice especially when she's talking about squashing my fishes."**

Jennie groaned inwardly but decided to come clean since as Irene told her earlier, there really isn't any reason for her to be hiding the fact that she asked the doctor for a morning after pill because of their carelessness last night. They did not have sex to make a baby. They did it out of physical satisfaction but they lost their wits along the way and forgot to use protection.

**"I'm sorry I didn't tell you. I don't know why I felt embarrassed to tell you. This is new to me you know,"**

Jennie apologized in a despondent tone, focusing her gaze on the edging of her skirt instead of meeting her husband's hazel eyes.

**"I asked for a pill prescription—the birth control kind. We forgot—"**

Lisa silenced her with a kiss on the lips. She understood why the brunette was reluctant to tell her. She's never had to deal with this kind of issue before. It must have scared the shit out of her thinking that their first-time sex might have made her pregnant.

Surely, babies aren't part of the agenda when she decided to have sex with her husband and she's on the same sentiment as her.

It had alarmed Lisa too when she realized why the brunette paid a visit to a gynecologist. She wanted to smack her head on the wall for failing to think about using a condom. There wasn't even a time,

as far as she could remember, that she forgot about protection. She always made sure she engages in protected sex.

She had been so focused on Jennie last night—feeling her against her, pleasuring her, making things easy for her and just the idea of her being the brunette's very first sexual partner did unimaginable things to her senses—that she completely spaced out on the matter of protection.

Jennie was momentarily stunned by Lisa's kiss but her hands that found its way inside her shirt caressed her skin soothingly, making her relax and assuring her that there was nothing to be discomfited about.

Lisa murmured against her lips, smiling at the fading pink tint that appeared on her cheeks a minute ago.

**"I'm sorry I forgot about it last night, Nini. It's my fault."**

Then her lips descended to the brunette's neck, kissing the smooth column.

**"Yes, it was."**

Jennie sighed tilting her head to give the tall woman better access to her neck and closing her eyes to let the tingling feeling of her kisses wash over her.

**"Uh, Lisa . . . with the other girls before . . . you forget it too?"**

**"Never."**

**"Why did you forget last night?"**

Lisa's lips kissed its way to her shoulder, nipping the exposed skin tenderly.

**"I blame you for that,"**

she jested.

**"You made me forget."**



**"You made me forget too."**

**"I guess we're even."**

Lisa laughed softly, boosting her wife off the counter and capturing her lips with a hard kiss that made the brunette moan low in her throat.

But when Lisa lifted her mouth and tugged at Jennie's arm to lead her toward the exit with the obvious intention of continuing their kissing upstairs in bed, sanity came back to Jennie. She pulled back her arm to get the Thai woman's attention and voiced out another one of her pressing concern.

**"Lisa, wait..."**

she said. Lisa stopped and gave her a confused stare. She stuttered to explain.

**"How—I still don't know how—Chaerin's ultimatum. I have to find out who told her about us."**

Instead of looking annoyed like she expected, Lisa stepped close and smiled at her. She raised a hand to stroke the side of her face as if trying to comfort her worries.

**"You don't have to prove anything to her."**

It was Jennie's turn to get puzzled.

**"But my inheritance is at stake, Lisa."**

She reasoned, slightly hurt that the tall woman would think so little of her problem with Chaerin.

**"It's not about the money. It's about getting what's rightfully mine."**

**"Nini, I know."**

**"No, you don't get it."**

Jennie countered quietly, shaking her head. She wants her to understand why she's worried when it comes to Chaerin.

**"That inheritance is the only—"**

Lisa finished for her.

**"Only connection you have with your parents."**

Jennie looked up to see her husband's smiling face but her eyes held a somber expression in them as she gazed into her worried ones.

**"I know."**

Lisa repeated, bracketing her jaw with both hands as she stroked the curve of her cheeks with her thumb.

**"Let me handle Chaerin, okay?"**

Jennie took a moment to weigh Lisa's idea then finding no reason to refuse, she nodded bizarrely pleased that the latter understands why she beats herself up over her stepmother. Even more so that the Thai woman would take away her problems and solve it herself.

**"How? Do you know who told her?"**

**"No. But didn't you say Chaerin also knows about me getting sick?"**

**"Yes."**

**"Other than the people in this house, nobody else knows I was sick. Well, except Irene but she doesn't count and I doubt my grandfather would chat with Chaerin about it."**

Lisa's hand fell away from her face to run up and down her arm in a slow caress. She couldn't seem to stop touching her no matter what they're doing.

**"It's possible someone in this household is under Chaerin's payroll too."**

**"Oh crap."**

Jennie groaned smacking her forehead with the palm of her hand for failing to consider that possibility. Even Mino did not think of that.

Lisa chuckled while taking a hold of her hand to stop her from scolding herself and laced their fingers together.

**"Not exactly crap. In fact, Chaerin saved you the trouble of proving we had sex. The entire household already knows. We have Irene and Grandpa to thank for that."**

**"And Seulgi too."**

Jennie mused with a hopeful glint in her eyes, already seeing the advantage of the embarrassing experience earlier when they were discovered by the servants and Patrick. If Lisa's suspicions are true, Chaerin already knows their marriage is a done deal.

**"But I don't mean that I liked what happened to Seulgi . . . just how the events played out that lead to them knowing that we did what we did."**

**"Sometimes you talk too much,"**

Lisa said playfully squeezing her cheek with her thumb and forefinger.

Jennie frowned.

**"You're lucky I like you,"**

she announced in a haughty manner then stepped away from Lisa's hold sticking her tongue out at her.

Lisa cracked up in laughter.

**"I like you too, Nini. I like you in bed with me right now."**

It was one of her rare abilities to shift from serious to mischievous in a snap that never falls short in entertaining her.

**"Come back here,"**

she said, reaching an arm out to pull her back in her embrace.

But Jennie evaded her, skirting off in the opposite direction and rounding the kitchen island so that she kept an ample distance from her husband.

**"I want ice cream,"**

she announced, smiling with mischief.

Lisa wants her with her—in bed.

**"I want something better than ice cream,"**

the Thai woman retorted already getting impatient, striding towards her but before She could grab her she moved around the counter again.

Jennie could see the sexual longing in her husband's eyes and her deliberate avoidance is obviously aggravating the latter. But she continued to tease, curious to see what the tall woman will do once her patience is stretched thin.

**"There's nothing better than ice cream. I've been craving for it since I got back."**

**"Ice cream is bad for you."**

Lisa played along but waited for a chance to catch her wife off guard so that she can grab her and pin her.

**"Ice cream is sweet."**

**"Sex is pleasurable."**

**"Ice cream is comfort food. You feel good when you eat it."**

**"Sex is satisfying. You feel physically contented after you do it."**

**"Ice cream is—"**

**"It's fattening. Sex is an exercise only ten times more exciting."**

**"Well, I still want ice cream."**

Jennie insisted firmly. She stifled a laugh when Lisa narrowed her eyes and her plump lips stretched into a thin line as proof of her impatience.

**"Hey Lisa. Jennie."**

Grandpa suddenly appeared in the kitchen, making them whirl around in surprise. He hovered close to the open door with a pleasant aura to his face. It was quite obvious that he heard their banter about ice cream and sex.

**"Grandpa, you're still not wanted."**

**"Don't be rude,"**

Jennie scolded Lisa which added more to the latter's irritation.

**"Grandpa, would you care for some ice cream?"**

**"Sure!"**

Patrick replied eagerly.

Lisa cursed aloud, braced her elbows on the countertop and pressed her forehead on the cool surface. She straightened after a couple of seconds and resignedly sat herself on one of the stool chairs. With a surly face, she watched Jennie take out the tub of milk ice cream from the fridge and then scoop some for her and her grandfather.

**"Why did you come back here?"**

Lisa asked her grandfather as the old man scurried over to the table by the window, a bowl of ice cream in one hand and his cane on the other.

**"I forgot to tell you two that I'm leaving tomorrow."**

Lisa's ears perked up. She cast a fleeting glance at Jennie seated on

the stool across her and saw that she was surprised as well.

**"Leaving as in flying back to Jeju?"**

**"Where else would I be flying off to? I live there."**

**"Just making sure,"**

Lisa said and the old man seems to have accepted that without much argument.

Lisa looked back at Jennie and quirked a meaningful brow at her. She smiled and took a spoonful of ice cream in her mouth, licking her lips as she ate.

**"Want some? It's delicious."**

Standing from the stool, she moved forward taking the spoon from her wife's hand to scoop up some ice cream but instead of tasting the dessert, she offered it back to her which Jennie gladly accepted. Then once the ice cream was inside the brunette's mouth, Lisa leaned down and kissed her, quickly slipping her tongue inside the cool confines.

**"Delicious."**

Lisa confirmed as soon as she drew back. Before Jennie could react to the devious glint in the tall woman's eyes, the latter pulled her up from her seat and unceremoniously hauled her over the Thai woman's shoulder like a sack of cement.

**"Lisa!"**

Jennie yelped.

**"Put me down!"**

**"You've had enough ice cream,"**

Lisa averred. Then with a hasty half turn, she genially called out to her grandfather,

**"Goodnight Grandpa."**

Patrick emitted a smothered laugh and reminded Lisa,

**"Lock your door."**

The din that Jennie made with her indignant protests did not go unnoticed by the servants in the house. In effect, most of them paused to investigate the reason for their mistress' shrieks and with smiles on their faces, they watched as Lisa trudged up the stairs, easily handling the added weight of her wife to her steps, as she continued to ignore her demand to be put down.

They only went back to their duties once the door upstairs closed with a bang and voices were no longer heard from either Lisa or Jennie.

[illegible]

Gone were the teasing, the smiles and the mischief in their eyes. It was replaced by a heated air that made them restless and eager. With their lips still joined, they moved inside Lisa's room. The Thai woman caught the door with her heel, and when it slammed closed they leaned against it, lost in each other's kisses.

"Nini, if I don't feel you soon, I'm going to go crazy,"

Lisa murmured against the brunette's semi parted lips.

A shiver ran through Jennie's body at the desire in Lisa's voice.

**"Me too."**

She covered her lips with her own, asserting her yearning for her husband.

**"I don't think I can go slow,"**

Lisa gruffly said a moment later while pulling her away from the door as she walked backwards to where the bed is and pinned Jennie tightly against the length of her rigid body.

**"Then don't go slow,"**

the brunette stated boldly as she kissed the side of Lisa's neck before backing out of her arms and looking into her darkened hazel eyes while she carefully began removing her clothes.

As she lifted her shirt off, Lisa couldn't believe that Jennie was undressing herself in front of her without shyness or hesitation. As the shirt fell to the floor, her hands pulled up her own shirt and flung it over her back. In what seem like a slow moving picture, they watched each other remove the lower half of their clothing until the brunette stood before her in just her matching red panties and bra and her in her usual sports bra and plain black boxers.

When Jennie reached for the clasp of her bra on her back, Lisa said,

**"Let me do it."**

Jennie's hand fell to her sides as the Thai woman reached her arms to her back for the clasp, letting it fall on the floor as soon as she unhooked the clasp. Then Lisa tugged her to the bed, urging her down until she lay under her, the tall woman's thumbs looped to the side of her panties and easily rid her of the piece of lace. She did the same to her sports bra and boxer shorts before Lisa moved over her, blocking out the light from the bedside lamp.

And then rapture began—from demanding kisses, restless hands and warm bodies pressing against each other.

Their tongues dueled fiercely as Lisa cupped her breast, kneading and shaping it to her pleasure. It was quickly followed by her warm mouth lavishing attention to the sensitive bud while Jennie arched off the mattress in invitation to do more. Lisa's other hand sought her womanly folds and fingers slipped inside the moist flesh to add more to her passion.

Jennie's own hands were not idle either. It was skimming all over the Thai woman's lean muscled arms and back while her legs tangled with hers, instinctively pressing her soft core to the erect length of flesh.



Lisa began trailing her lips down on the brunette's body and once it reached the desired destination, dipped her head to lash her tongue out to the wet throbbing core . . . stroking, licking the soft folds with expertise until Jennie tensed then shuddered in overwhelming rupture, helplessly calling her name.

When Jennie regained her breathing, she pushed Lisa off so that the latter lay flat on the bed. Jennie wanted to feel a sense of fulfillment for herself. She wants to pleasure Lisa the way the Thai woman just did her.

Lisa knew her intention as soon as she dropped kisses to her sweaty chest, abs and the line of muscle below her waist. Her hands were languidly stroking her bare leg, from inner to outer thigh to her bent knees and back up.

Lisa's heartbeat came in erratic beats while she lay under her wife's somewhat nervous ministrations—waiting, drifting in pleasure, wanting to feel more. After some time, Jennie finally touched her fully aroused penis. Lisa jerked once as if electrified by her hand, bracing herself up on her elbows to watch her.

**"You're so beautiful—and so—big."**

Jennie uttered in amazement. As though someone had cast a powerful spell on her being, the reservation and shyness she should be feeling in her second time for sex disappeared. And without scruple, she leaned over her husband, kissed the tip and took her inside her mouth.

**"Shit, Nini!"**

Lisa groaned dropping back on the bed, surprised by her boldness which was quickly overcome by pleasure. She isn't one to complain about the wonderful feel of Jennie's mouth or that she's suddenly unleashing her sexual aggressiveness but Lisa doesn't want to waste so much time with foreplay. They can do that in the next round. Right now, it's her the tall woman wants.

**"Babe . . . Nini, stop . . ."**

Lisa tugged at the brunette's arms to pull her on top of her.

Lisa rolled them over so that she was under her again. Lisa captured her lips in a searing kiss. Jennie clung to her neck, opening her lips to let the Thai woman delve into the warm confines of her mouth. Silky, wet tongues twisted together—greedy, reckless—wordlessly letting the other know of their desires.

The kiss lasted for endless minutes until Lisa lifted her lips and her eyes became eloquent as she stared into the brunette's, asking for permission. Jennie softly smiled, giving it to Lisa without compunction and a second later she felt the hot slide of her rigid member into her inner most center, making them both moan in sudden gratification.

Their bodies molded together like puzzle pieces as Lisa was fully embedded in her. Then soon after, they moved in harmony at a steadily increasing rhythm that forced inarticulate sounds past Jennie's lips, raising her body to meet the Thai woman's driving strokes.

Lisa buried her face in the curve of her wife's neck murmuring words Jennie could barely comprehend and nipping at her pleasure spot while her strong arm wrapped around the brunette's waist slightly lifting the lower half of her body. She was hungry for her and it showed when a while later Lisa thrust roughly into her at an even faster pace.

Lisa's shoulders were sleek and firm, her hair plastered to her forehead with a thin layer sweat and the lean muscles of her arms resilient as Jennie ran her hands over them, taking in the pleasure of her husband's furious thrusts. Jennie closed her eyes and moaned.

**"Oh god . . ."**

Suddenly, Lisa stopped and without breaking their joined lower bodies, shifted positions so that she was now sitting on the bed while Jennie was straddling her. Lisa gave her wife a few moments to adjust to the new position before she curved her hands around Jennie's hips and guided her into a tempo that made her forget that

they aren't alone in the mansion and that their room isn't sound proof for the loud noises she was making as a result of their activities.

Lisa met Jennie's body with upward thrusts of her own, kissing her neck, her breast until they became wild with need. Moving together to reach their peaks, never slowing down, desperate to achieve again the wonderful promise of sensual celebration they got to experience last night.

Soon enough, with the added depth of their position, Jennie felt the enormous pressure beginning to build within her. Every push Lisa made hit the right spot each time, sending her closer over the edge.

**"Lisa . . . I'm almost . . ."**

**"Look at me,"**

Lisa ordered never letting up with the pace of her thrusts, cradling the brunette's face with her rough palms so that they could stare in each other's eyes.

**"I want to see you when you come."**

Maybe it was her erotic words or maybe the wild thrusting of their bodies or something else they haven't discovered yet but shortly after Lisa said the words, Jennie cried out loudly as the pressure inside her exploded to a million pieces before her eyes.

The amazing play of emotions in her glassy eyes when she reached her climax ignited Lisa's self control. Her arms closed up around the brunette tightly as she arched her back while her deep spasms drove her higher and higher and made her suddenly burst with a shout of male-like satisfaction, spilling everything inside her tight core like the Thai woman's life depended on her very presence.

They fell back on the bed side by side, bodies quivering from the incredible heights they attained. Only their heavy breathing was heard for some time as they lay exhausted, damp and disheveled.

Limbs and arms were useless for movement.

But despite it all, their eyes told a different story.

As they gazed each other with unspoken emotion neither is ready to acknowledge at this time, Lisa moved her right hand with an effort to cover her palm that rested on the pillow beside her face and then threaded her fingers with hers, squeezing tightly.

Jennie didn't know it but Lisa had never held another woman's hand in the aftermath of sex.

**A/N:**

## [17] Changes

Pleasure came wafting over Jennie at waking to the sight of a sleeping Lisa.

Lying on her belly, she propped up slightly and studied her at leisure, taking note of the compellingly beautifully handsome face that can be charming or serious when need be, the long eyelashes that seem to have grown overnight and her sexy and lean torso, muscled in all the right places.

She's quite possibly every hormonal woman's dream woman. And she is—was—as far as Jennie knew. It gave her such a sense of doubt, mixed in with a good amount of pleasure, that someone who's as physically splendid and as enjoyable as Lisa is married to her.

The few girlish times she shared with Irene when they were seven years old, imagining the person they'd be married to—in Irene's case, it was always Mino she envisaged to marry and Jennie knew it even before the black haired girl admitted it to her—or how they wanted the wedding to be, didn't quite come close to reality.

First of all, her wedding was arranged . . . no rational, modern day woman would want that. To say she was unhappy during that day would be an understatement because she was an emotional wreck and Lisa, a total stranger at that time, gave face to the person in her childish imagination.

Before their marriage, her opinion of Lisa Manoban was bordering on sordidness and she could not find any good thing about her other than the physical outlook. She understood then why Chaerin would choose her to be her husband because she was a cocky, uncaring, thoughtless and self-centered prick that doesn't give a damn what others think of her. Plus, her reputation as a lady's woman precedes her anywhere.

Chaerin was counting on the fact that Lisa would definitely raise her hackles with the latter's brash attitude and womanizing ways. Her evil stepmother wanted her to be miserable in the arranged marriage. And she might have succeeded too had it not been for that blind date Nayeon set up for them.

That was the turning point of their so-called marriage because they both agreed to give it a chance. And that chance sure did change a lot! The most prominent change would have to be Lisa's attitude. She went from cocky to charming in just a short span of time that if Jennie weren't living with the said Thai woman, she wouldn't have believed it.

From that day, they started to have an actual relationship. It may not have been the conventional type of relationship since they are married but were acting like chums, but it was a good start. So good in fact that it led to the marriage being consummated and to this day of . . . marital bliss?

Okay, not marital bliss exactly.

She shouldn't dare say that at this time what with their marriage being arranged and it's only been months that they've been, in a sense,

*together*

and not even fully so because of several

*issues*

between them that they don't really discuss openly. But whatever it should be or could be called, for now, she's just inexplicably content being with Lisa.

**"We're good together, Nini."**

Lisa had said to her last night before sleep overcame her senses. Whether she means it in a sexual way or otherwise, she had wholeheartedly agreed because whichever way she looks at it, in the short time that they gave their relationship a chance, they really became good together.

She should probably consider thanking Chaerin for choosing Lisa.

Silently chuckling, Jennie immediately shoved the idea aside. She doesn't owe that woman any

*thank you*

. If she has to thank people, there's a long list of them including Lisa and Patrick and even Nayeon but her stepmother isn't one of them.

*Is Chaerin regretting her decision in choosing Lisa?*

As luck would have it, most likely so.

And with that small knowledge in mind, she claims victory from her stepmother.

With a satisfied smile on her lips, Jennie's eyes strayed to the clock hanging on the wall and became conscious that it was time to wake Lisa up. But instead of nudging sleeping woman awake, she decided to try a different approach. She reached out a hand and repeatedly ran the tip of her fingernail on the bridge of the tall woman's nose in a fluttery stroke.

**"Lisa-aaaa. . ."**

Jennie whispered directly to the Thai woman's ear in a sing-song voice.

Lisa's head moved slightly to avoid the sound and her nose twitched, but her eyes stayed closed.

**"Wake up, Lis-a-aaa."**

Jennie chanted again, continuously teasing her husband's nose but this time pushing against the skin between the nostrils, deforming its shape.

She stifled a laugh then made a deliberate

*oink-oink*

sound and said,

**"Oh look another pig in the room!"**

Still no reaction. Not even a slight indication that she was awake.

**"Okay, no pigs. You hate pigs,"**

Jennie murmured shaking her head then, as though another brilliant idea flashed in her brain, she pursed her lips doggedly and braced herself a little higher.

**"Let's join in the rat race! Street rat versus house rat! Who's gonna win?"**

She exclaimed in an commentator-like tone and began running her pointer and middle finger all over the sleeping woman's face, trailing over her shoulders and detouring to her naked chest.

**"Place your bets everybody!"**

But the latter merely wriggled her nose and did not open her eyes, putting Jennie's teasing effort to waste.

Undaunted, Jennie shimmied over beside her. She propped her upper body, pressing her bare breast against the Thai woman's chest and rested her chin close to her exposed long neck. Jennie felt a soft rippling of muscles as Lisa's body immediately reacted to her closeness but the latter still did not open her eyes.

Jennie kissed her on the lips once and said in the huskiest voice she could sound out,

**"You have an uprising going on down there."**

Then she let her fingers walk very slowly from the Thai woman's chest, making a beeline for the lower part of her body.

Lisa's chest shook in silent laughter as she caught her wife's travelling fingers before it could go further than her abs and finally she opened her smiling hazel eyes to look at her.



**"Would you be interested in getting tangled with my uprising?"**

Unable to keep a straight face, Jennie snickered and shook her head.

**"Nope."**

She replied bracing up a little to adjust her weight, affording Lisa a view of her luscious breasts that made desire run through her, waking her sleepy nerve endings.

**"I just wanted to wake you up."**

**"Don't they wake sleeping people with a kiss? Not with pig sounds or rat races."**

**"That's only true with sleeping princesses in fairytales,"**

Jennie contradicted with a smirk, propping her chin atop her crossed wrist.

**"You definitely won't pass as a princess and this is no fairytale either."**

**"Girls usually believe in that stuff."**

**"I'm 23. I don't qualify as a girl anymore."**

**"Oh I agree . . ."**

Lisa concurred in an evocative voice, gently tucking back the few curls that brushed against her cheeks and grinning meaningfully at her.

**"Of course,"**

she drolly said.

Lisa smiled charmingly then intoned,

**"Well, I'm awake."**

**"Good. Now we have to get up,"**

Jennie said starting to move but Lisa's arms suddenly tightened around her before she could slide off.

Then Lisa swiftly flipped her over. It feels like the Thai woman is on cloud nine, holding the brunette in her arms like now, waking up to her teasing and just to experience day to day the overall liveliness of their relationship that she didn't think was even possible before. What they have certainly isn't a fairytale and it isn't perfect either, but Lisa would rather take this reality any day over some crazy tale involving fairies.

**"Not yet,"**

Lisa whispered huskily, her free hand cupping the back of her head threading through the silky brown curls as she lifted her head up slightly to meet her in a kiss.

Lisa touched her tongue to her lips, sliding between, coaxing them apart and when it did, she plunged her tongue in, sending wave after wave of hot sensation to jolt through Jennie's body.

It was an unhurried kiss, like Lisa has all the time in the world to explore her mouth and taste its sweetness but it has the same crazily erotic effect as the hard, insistent kisses she showers on her when they're having sex.

Jennie fought her way above the haze that was beginning to cloud her mind.

**"Lisa, we have to get up . . . now."**

She tried to articulate through the kiss.

**"You told me last night . . . we're going to surprise Grandpa . . . by seeing him off to the airport."**

However, Lisa did not pay her reminder any mind. She made a short humming sound in the back of her throat and kept on lightly kissing her lips, the outline of her jaw, her neck and the valley between her breasts. She looks most beautiful in the morning that between the choice of getting up from bed or enjoying a morning tryst with her, the Thai woman easily chose the latter.

**"Lisa . . . we have to drive Grandpa to the airport."**

**"Few minutes more,"**

Lisa murmured, silencing her reminder with a deep, consuming kiss to which she easily responded to.

But Jennie tore her mouth away before the kiss could blow up into something else—like how their kiss three hours after the first round of sex became the onset for round two. She had to stop Lisa while she still has control of her sanity. They don't have time for a third episode. Grandpa will be gone by the time they're done and she doesn't want that happening. She wants to be able to say a proper goodbye to the old guy.

Jennie let her hand slide from the Thai woman's shoulder to her chest with the intention of pushing the latter back but Jennie suddenly felt Lisa's heart against her palm, beating hard and fast as if like she just ran a marathon.

"

**Your heart is pounding,"**

Jennie mentioned softly as if amazed by her discovery.

Lisa stopped her kisses to look into her eyes then she placed her own palm on the brunette's chest and also felt her heartbeat.

**"Just like yours."**

*Does it mean she is affected by their kisses the way that she is?*

**"Y-yes."**

Jennie rejoined, eyeing chestnut haired woman warily, noting that something was different about her. Something had changed in the way her striking hazel eyes were gazing at her—something decidedly . . .

*loving.*

*Loving?*

Jennie has gotten so used to Lisa's lustful stares even from the beginning that she at once concluded it was her eyes conjuring up something that isn't even there. She blinked once and hastily forestalled her gaze.

**"Grandpa is kinda' meddlesome sometimes but I will miss him,"**

she said in a logical tone, already discounting what she saw.

**"And you know how he is with punctuality."**

Lisa chortled but conceded anyway.

**"Okay, okay!"**

She pushed her body off of hers.

**"Let's get ready for the old rouge."**

As soon as her weight lifted, Jennie slid off in a glory of curves and shapes and started away from the bed in search for her shirt among pieces of clothing strewn about the carpeted floor.

Lisa followed her movements and took in the sight of her nakedness glowing in the morning light streaming through the curtained windows behind her, admiring every bit of gorgeousness that she had thoroughly touched and kissed merely a few hours ago.

**"Stop looking at me that way,"**

Jennie rebuked to cover up her sudden fluster when she noticed her husband's look, grabbing the clothing next to her foot and then quickly slipped it on.

It's a different case when Lisa stares at her while having sex, but outside of it she feels a little bit awkward. When she isn't overcome with desire thus able to think clearly, she's not as confident in front of the Thai woman without her clothing.

**"I can't do that,"**



its income comes from the restaurants, bars or clubs that Lisa is mainly in charge of. Lisa isn't one of the figure heads that's why she dresses more casually than most executives. Patrick still holds that position and so does Lisa's father but Lisa's position is definitely of huge importance to the company.

Jennie also became friendly with most of the employees of Manoban Corporation especially the secretaries and staff on the executive floors who would often gush about her husband's impressive business acumen and then later on, most of them sheepishly admitted to having a crush on her. It didn't come as a surprise to Jennie anymore. Knowing Lisa better than before, she couldn't really blame any of them. But while most of them expected her to be annoyed by all of her husband's admirers, Jennie actually felt proud because the admiration is well justified.

There were also instances where she would spend the few hours before she was required in the studio in Lisa's private office. She would just sit in one of the corner couches so as not to get in the way of her husband's daily work schedule or with the tide of people who come and go in her office with their varying concerns that needed her husband's attention.

From her corner, Jennie would either occupy herself with going over a certain model's portfolio, tinkering with her camera or simply reading a book—all the while throwing brief glances at Lisa going about her work.

At the outset, Jennie thought the Thai woman wouldn't like her presence there because it meant she was another person she has to mind and she doesn't even have anything to do with her work, but as she discovered, it wasn't the case.

*Jennie looked up from the page of the art book she has been staring keenly at when a faint shadow cast over the page. "Lisa!" She exclaimed, surprised that her husband was in front of her when just a second ago she was seated behind her desk mulling over a stack of papers. "You're done?"*

*Lisa grinned. "Far from it."*

**"You want me to go—"**

*The Thai woman's next move was so abrupt, that Jennie could only yelp in reaction when Lisa suddenly scooped her out of the couch, sat herself on the space she vacated while sitting her on her lap and capturing her lips in a kiss that was enough to curl her toes with its intensity and passion.*

*Then when she was satisfied, she stood up, placed her down on the couch, gave her an endearing smile and a kiss on the cheek then went back to her desk to continue her paperwork as if what she did to Jennie was all part of her office routine.*

**"Wha—"**

*Jennie tried to speak, both confused and physically bothered by the tall woman's unexpected kiss. "What was that for?"*

*Lisa shrugged nonchalantly, already seated on her chair, and answered, "Just making sure that you're still here and it's also a preview."*

**"Huh?"**

**"Preview for tonight."**

*Then Lisa winked at her before pressing the intercom to tell her secretary to send in whoever wanted to see her.*

Apparently, Lisa liked having her in her office while she's working as much as she liked having her in bed.

In truth, Jennie had lost track of how many times they've had sex. Not that she's counting anyway but their nights are always a passionate feasting of bodies that can't seem to get enough of each other despite the many times and many ways they express their physical wanting. It's as if there is a written rule between them that nights should be a time for physical release after several hours apart.

Jennie had been a little uneasy at first that a mere kiss could easily arouse her senses but she had learned to accept the fact that Lisa has that effect on her and she can't deny to herself that she wants

her husband just as much as she does to her. However, more than the actual sex, she enjoys most what comes after, when the Thai woman would hold her in her protective arms, lazily tracing the outline of her body and talking quietly about trifle matters that come to mind until they both fall asleep.

But sometimes it wasn't just Jennie who makes the effort, if her husband's schedule permits, Lisa would come by the studio and surprise her of her presence in the middle of a shoot, bringing in an assortment of food for everyone or intermittently giving out passes to one of her clubs, which her staff greatly appreciates and as a result of the latter's thoughtfulness, most of them had grown rather fond of her husband and even went as far as including the latter in their tight little circle.

When there are days that they are both extremely busy with absolutely no time to spare, Lisa often calls her just like when they first became friends, asking about her day, the shoot she was doing, about one or the other person in her staff or just plain randomness.

It was these little things that the people around them noticed most about the couple. They aren't flaunt with their affections in public but the

*chemistry*

—evident in their eye contact, their body language or how one seem to know what the other is thinking even without saying anything—spoke volumes, that one look alone will tell you, whether you know them or not, they are a couple.

Of course, they also make for a striking pair and especially when they first attended a social event arranged by Irene for Chanel, a lot of the guests ended up smiling at the two who were far from each other's side only once the entire night.

What they didn't know though was during that occasion, Lisa grew annoyed with the stares being thrown at Jennie by quite a number of men, who either did not know she was taken or was purposely ignoring that fact that she had a ring on her finger, that she made it a point to stay by her wife's side at all times.



**"Your friends are waving at you, Lisa. Don't you want to go to them?"**

*Jennie asked, concerned that the Thai woman was probably feeling obligated to stick by her side thus forgoing her chance to blend in the crowd like she usually does.*

**"Not really."**

*Came Lisa's terse reply.*

*Jennie was taken aback by the curtness of her tone. "Why not? Most of the people here know you too and they've been wanting your attention."*

**"Do you have any idea how you look like?"**

*It was another one of her off questions that did nothing but baffle before it could enlighten the brunette, but Jennie replied anyway. "I look the same as any day except with a nice dress."*

**"There's nothing ordinary about how you look, Jennie. You're fucking gorgeous and most of the dickheads here see it."**

**"Are—are you jealous?"**

*It was an incredulous assumption but the gleam of annoyance in Lisa's eyes told the brunette she might be.*

*Lisa didn't at once answer her. Jennie felt her stiffen slightly like she was surprised by her query and had realized how foolish her reaction was. Lisa eyed her strangely and after a minute, released a heavy sigh.*

**"No."**

*The Thai woman said. "I'm just being stupid. Sorry. I'll go mingle."*

*The small spurt of joy that was budding inside Jennie over the fact that Lisa might be jealous was instantly doused by the latter's denial. She didn't know what exactly happened to her to react that way when there were also several females staring longingly at her. But if the angry flare in Lisa's eyes that seem to have pierced right through her is any*



a nonfigurative art work.

**"Oh. My. Goodness."**

Jennie spurted out and eyed Lisa who appeared like she was still processing why her face was suddenly covered with a bright orange color when all she did was walk into the partially constructed master's bedroom in search of her wife and ask a perfectly logical question.

**"Look what you made me do."**

Lisa regained her wits after ten seconds or so and used her hands to wipe the paint off her eyelids and on the corner of her mouth then bellowed in an annoyed tone.

**"What did I made you do?! You splattered orange paint on my face!"**

**"You crept up on me!"**

**"You better come up with a fucking convincing explanation for whatever you're doing here or else . . ."**

**"Please believe me when I say THAT is not intentional . . . but accidental,"**

Jennie interrupted, already wary of her next move.

**"Do I look like I give a shit which one it is?!"**

Jennie shook her head dutifully but she was ready to erupt in giggles at the sight of Lisa—all orange and pissed.

**"No. You look more like an orange."**

She swallowed a bout of hilarity then continued.

**"That got—pulped!"**

Lisa's hazel eyes narrowed intently at her face that was doing its best to keep an innocent bearing.

**"You're mocking me,"**

she stated with sureness and there was some sort of warning in her voice.

**"Of course not!"**

Jennie objected with what she hoped was an indignant tone.

**"I take offense to that, Lisa. I would never make fun of someone who just got painted orange no matter how juicy it looks."**

**"How saintly of you,"**

Lisa grumbled with deliberate sarcasm then she took off her shirt, leaving her wearing her sports bra only, to use it to wipe the rest on the paint on her face.

Failing to hold it in any longer, Jennie burst out in laughter.

**"A few stripes of black and you're good to go as a basketball!"**

She retorted in between laughs.

**"Add in white stripes then you're Nemo—that's gonna be so cute!"**

Lisa growled, threw her shirt on the floor and suddenly leaped forward to grab her but Jennie was quick to react despite weltering in mirth. She skipped backwards and waved a finger at the Thai woman.

**"No way,"**

Jennie said still giggling.

**"You should consider taking a bath before I come near you. I don't like my woman . . . orange!"**

**"Talk all you want, Nini. When I catch you, you'll wish you never played with paint."**

**"Oooh, I'm scared,"**

Jennie mocked with a fake shudder.

**"You should be."**

**"For the record, Lisa, I wasn't playing with paint. I was making a backdrop for a shoot."**

**"Yeah, sure and of all the places to paint, you had to choose this room."**

**"Because I didn't want to make a mess on the other rooms."**

**"Whatever."**

They ran all over the spacious room for a good five minutes with Lisa trying to outsmart Jennie's evading tactics. She was like a pro slipping from Lisa's hands and weaving with precise movements through some construction tools and materials left in the room by the workers who were reporting back to work the next day, Monday.

And it didn't help that Jennie still taunted Lisa while laughing merrily.

**"What's wrong, Lisa? Orange you glad you came in here?"**

**"Haha. Very funny, Nini."**

The tall woman intoned in mild frustration.

Lisa was almost ready to give up the chase and declare Jennie victorious not because she was tired or couldn't keep up with her sprightly moves but because the smear of orange paint was beginning to dry and harden, tightening the skin on her face to a point of discomfort. But she inadvertently stumbled on the orange coated paint brush Jennie dropped earlier and a eureka-moment crossed her brilliant mind.

She stopped chasing the brunette to pick up the brush, dipped it the can of royal blue paint and when Jennie skipped past her, she

repeatedly whipped the brush in her direction to spatter the paint on her.

Jennie shrieked as paint landed on her clothes and on her left cheek, arms and the backs of her legs.

**"Hey! No fair!"**

She protested, aghast by the blue taint all over herself. She looked even worse than Lisa.

With her turn to laugh, Lisa took no time in grabbing her hand, tugging the brunette next to her and planting a kiss on her clean cheek.

**"Blue looks good on you, Nini."**

Jennie stepped closer to her and wiped the side of her face on the Thai woman's bare chest.

**"On you too."**

With mischief in their eyes, they stared at each other for a moment as if waiting, daring the other to make a move but instead of going on an all out paint splattering contest, they erupted in laughter together and made fun of their paint streaked looks.

**"We should wash this off,"**

Lisa suggested as she handed Jennie her white shirt to wipe off the rest of the blue paint.

**"Swim?"**

She inquired.

**"With you?"**

**"Who else?"**

Lisa grinned.

**"Let's go then."**

Jennie moved from her side and got behind Lisa, jumping on the latter's back. Lisa's hands immediately closed around her thighs, holding her legs securely on either side of her thin waist while the brunette wrapped her arms over her shoulders and kissed the side of her neck.

**"Get moving, Manoban."**

Once they reached the door, both looked back inside the unfinished master's bedroom. Lisa let her eyes roam the space and couldn't help but smile at the picture that was forming in her mind about what their room will look like once it's finished.

Despite the many uncertainties and issues between them, they still managed to come this far and so a new room is only fitting for this unexpected milestone in their arranged marriage.

And frankly, she couldn't wait to move in.

But Jennie had other thoughts in mind.

**"The workers will not be happy with the mess on the wall and the floor."**

**"I won't tell if you won't."**

Jennie tipped her head to look at her husband's face with its lips curved in an impish smile.

**"Deal."**

## [18] Further

Jennie pulled off her soiled tank top, tossed it over the nearest chaise then it was followed by her shorts, all the while Lisa was watching her do it. There was nothing new about her stripping in front of the Thai woman, most times she isn't even left with anything to cover her like the turquoise bikini set she's currently wearing.

But Lisa still couldn't resist staring.

The brunette is every man's dream. Beautiful, smart, sweet, funny and downright sexy. Jennie is the kind of woman a man looks at, then starts dreaming about it. She is that dreamy—like a prize to be won.

That was Lisa's problem almost five months ago. Since she had gone on her self-imposed celibacy back then, she had done a great deal of dreaming about the brunette but thankfully though, things had turned out excellently for her because dreamy isn't the case now. When her dreams became a reality, she became physically and sexually active with the dream woman.

Lisa loves seeing that passionate side of Jennie when they're having sex. She was a little reserved the first few times, holding back on her desires but with her constant urging and repeated practice she had let go and became an irresistible goddess who willingly participates in their tumultuous coupling. Whether she took her roughly or with deliberate slowness until she would order her to go faster, she was enjoying every minute of their time together.

And it wasn't just about the sex—so awesome that it is. Lisa also takes pleasure in spending idle time with her or just goofing around and teasing each other. That was the beauty of their cozy little set-up. Although they were forced to marry, starting over as is proper, giving a chance at friendship while well into the marriage, gave them a more solid base for a relationship.



**"Deep in thought,"**

Jennie mused, quirking a brow at the tall woman while she knotted her hair into a loose bun top her head.

**"Or staring at my breasts."**

Lisa's eyes lifted up from staring at the swell of her breasts underneath the push up bra and focused to look at her inquiring ones. She smiled.

**"Admiring."**

**"Flattery will get you nowhere."**

Lisa chuckled, stepping closer to wrap her arms around Jennie's tiny waist.

**"You mean I won't be lucky tonight?"**

**"Very astute, Lisa Manoban!"**

Jennie retorted with mock derision but even as she does so, she was already clinging to her husband's neck.

**"You're willing to stand by this decision?"**

**"Absolutely."**

**"Second thoughts maybe?"**

**"None whatsoever."**

**"So there's nothing I can do to make you change your mind?"**

Jennie shook her head pretending to be adamant. But as if with an afterthought, she asked,

**"What exactly do you plan on doing to make me change my mind?"**

Lisa grinned, tightening her embrace on her, lifting her up slightly and pressing the junction between her thighs against her erection

that was beginning to assert itself under her woman board shorts. Lisa grinned even more when the brunette in her arms gasped.

**"I believe in the element of surprise,"**

Lisa whispered close to Jennie's ear.

**"You'll just have to wait to find out, won't you?"**

**"Well, whatever that is, I'm sure it won't sway me to reconsider."**

**"Let's just see about that."**

**"You sound so sure,"**

Jennie stated, welcoming the Thai woman's deliberate actions of chafing her against the latter's growing bulge.

**"I am."**

Lisa countered smugly. Her hands lowered down to the brunette's butt and gave it a light squeeze.

**"I can feel you're beginning to waver even now and I'm not doing anything yet."**

**"Maybe I'm sending you mixed signals."**

Lisa cracked up at this.

**"Really lame, Nini."**

**"Whatever, Lisa. You like me anyway."**

**"It's no secret,"**

the Thai said without opposition then promptly lowered her head to capture Jennie's smiling lips in a kiss.

Jennie knew what she was about to do before Lisa bent her head. This had happened several times already. They'll be teasing one moment then would be making out the next. She was perfectly fine

with it but even so, keeping in line with her teasing, she refused to be seduced by her husband's plump and inviting lips. She stayed within the circle of her arms, letting the Thai kiss her but she did her best not to respond.

Lisa recognized her wife's resistance when she persistently kept her lips closed from her assaultive tongue. Undaunted by the minor setback, she took it as a challenge and doubled her efforts to elicit a response from the brunette.

It was like a game for them that started about two weeks ago. Jennie would try her very best not to give in to the Thai's seduction while she would do her part in making sure her resistance becomes futile. Sometimes her opposition crumbles easily, other times it takes longer than Lisa would like almost driving her to frustration but either way it goes, the ending is always pleasurable for them both.

And this one won't be different either. It might even be better than the previous times.

Lisa moved her hands, placing one on the small of Jennie's back and the other slipped over her rib cage as she slowly slid it up to cup the underside of her breast through the turquoise bra then her fingers tightened suddenly over the fullness.

Jennie took a sharp intake of breath, allowing Lisa to slash her tongue inside and deepen the kiss. Much as she would like to just stand there and let the Thai woman do all the kissing, she's unable to resist her own hunger for her any longer. With a moan of defeat, she began kissing her back with pure abandon.

Lisa's finger then slid inside the cup of her bra top and purposely grazed the tightly budded nipple in its confine, making her body press closer against her erection. She almost cried out loud at the blessed feeling and briefly she forgot that she's supposed to be taunting her husband, not wanting her to do more. She suddenly wants her breast exposed to her warm hands, her teasing mouth . . . she wants to feel her inside her . . .

**"Do you want me to stop?"**

Lisa asked through the kiss. It came off like a rough whisper as though it was becoming painful for her to speak properly.

Jennie drew her arms from around the Thai's neck, her voice allowing some sanity to come back in her head, then she leaned away from Lisa to say,

**"Can you stop?"**

**"No."**

**"You have to—not here. The servants are—"**

Lisa kept on with the assault on her lips, making sure she feels the hot need inside of her through the kiss.

**"I told Seungri we are not to be disturbed."**

Jennie slipped her hands between them and shoved against her husband's honed chest until the latter's hands and lips disconnected from her.

**"Nice try, Lisa, but today is not your lucky day,"**

Jennie avowed, breathing hard like she just climbed a thousand steps of stairs without pause. Much as she likes to continue, she's not quite prepared to be kinky with Lisa while they're still smeared with paint and most especially not in the indoor pool area enclosed with glass panels that anybody who passes by can see what they're doing.

Lisa's eyes looked disbelieving for a brief moment then it was quickly replaced by a gritty spark.

**"Okay."**

Surprised that she simply relented when judging from the tent on her shorts it was plainly obvious she is well aroused already, Jennie doubtfully inquired,

**"That's it? No arguments?"**

**"None but it doesn't mean I can't do this—"**

The Thai suddenly grabbed her waist and made a quick sprint toward the pool, jumping in, with her securely wrapped in her arm, as she reached the edge.

She shrieked. But it was too late.

The loud splash disturbed the stillness of the water and cut through the silence inside the pool area when they plunged in then it was followed by Jennie sputtering water as she indignantly whined her displeasure at the sneaky move.

**"Urgh!"**

Jennie grumbled, gathering her hair that came unbound, her composure and the expelled air from her lungs.

**"You will be the death of me!"**

Lisa merely laughed and adjusted the strap of her bra that fell off her shoulder.

**"Ready?"**

**"Ready for what?"**

**"To swim!"**

the Thai said, unwrapping her arm from the brunette's waist and swimming a little ways away.

A little disconcerted that the direction of her thoughts was on the dirty path, Jennie sighed and trailed behind Lisa who was smirking at her like she can see what was running inside her head.

But as soon as she relaxed and concentrated on the warm and relaxing water surrounding her skin, Jennie began gliding through the pool like an expert swimmer. So did Lisa. And with no time at all, they were swimming shoulder to shoulder while doing laps on the rectangular pool. Next, they swam circles around each other in a flirtatious attempt to tug off their scant clothing and splashed

water in each other's direction, floating side by side in the clear water, skin to skin. They did this for several minutes before both decided it was time to take a short rest.

Lisa tipped her head toward the shallower end, silently telling Jennie to follow her. She did but kept a good distance away to watch the Thai woman stretched out in the water moving her body to stay afloat, her lean muscles rippling with the pool water as she swam.

**"Come on,"**

Lisa said when she noticed her staring. She leaned against the pool tile and crossed her arms over her chest as she waited for Jennie to swim close.

Jennie smiled that cute little gummy smile of hers, blushing a little at being discovered she had been staring at her, and slowly swam over to where Lisa was. She moved naturally through the water. Lisa had her eyes glued on her thinking how lucky she is to have her wife with her right now. Things could have gone so wrong and so ugly between them but a small twist of events made all the difference.

But how long will her luck with Jennie stay?

Their future is so uncertain that just thinking about tomorrow or the subsequent days makes Lisa almost afraid to invest so much into their relationship. She's afraid she'll wake up one day and all of this will be gone. Just like what happened to her and Niki. Yet, even as she holds back on her feelings—or at least tries to—she knows the time for holding back has sailed months ago.

She's already too attached, too involved.

The rules she set for relationships went flying out the window the moment she began spending every waking moment with Jennie and gradually began discovering what a wonderful person she really is. It was amazing how the brunette managed to draw out the old Lisa—the less cynic, less guarded Lisa—with the simple but endearing things she does for her. Lisa didn't even realize she was unwittingly

doing it until last Friday when she talked to Seulgi.

**"This is your wife were talking about! Not one of those one time fucks you had plenty of in the past,"**

*Seulgi had said when out of the blue, she dropped by her office. They were talking about nothing in particular at the start then the topic shifted in the direction of Jennie, their marriage and how happy Lisa seems to be because of her.*

**"Because it's temporary. What we have is a five-year marriage,"**

*Lisa reminded her best friend, a little irritated at the mention of the terms of their legal union.*

**"Tell me, Lisa, in all the time you spend with Jennie—in bed or out of it—does the words 'five year marriage only' ever enter your mind?"**

**"No."**

**"No?"**

**"Not ever."**

**"Is this about having a good fuck for five years?"**

*Lisa's eyed narrowed dangerously at the unbecoming impression Seulgi was trying to associate Jennie with but she did not back down. She met her friend's gaze squarely.*

**"Talk about my wife like that again and I will throw you out the window,"**

*Lisa said with unmistakable warning in her voice.*

**"My wife."**

*Seulgi repeated with a grin, bobbing her head favorably, paying no heed to the ire in Lisa's voice. "A very husbandly term."*

**"Why did you come here again?!"**

**"Why do you still think you're only married to her for five years? You're obviously happy with her and she's looking just as happy to be with you and the rest of humanity, including my wonderful self, can see it."**

*Seulgi indolently leaned back against the backrest of the leather seat across Lisa's desk, carefully observing her best friend like she is a qualified psychologist having a session with a disturbed patient. After a minute of silence, Seulgi's suddenly straightened on her seat. "You know . . . I've seen you this happy with Niki but somehow it's still different. You look much happier now."*

**"Don't mention her name!"**

*Lisa snapped.*

*Seulgi's eyes grew wide in realization—a realization she didn't particularly like. "Oh fucking crap! This is the problem!"*

**"What?"**

**"Do you still love Niki?!"**

**"What kind of question is that?!"**

*Lisa lashed out in aggravation. "I hate her."*

**"I hated her—as in, in the past, Lisa. Because what she did to you was fucked up. I still don't like her but I don't hate her now because that was a long time ago. She's of no importance to me so I am not wasting my energy carrying this grudge for her after all these years. And what I mean by that is, you should do the same!"**

*Seulgi said, ranting out words with ill-concealed frustration. "When I ask you if you still love Niki, a proper answer would have been a simple no."*

**"I hate her that means I don't love her."**

**"Listen to yourself, Lisa. You sound like a fickle minded girl!"**

*Seulgi retorted, standing from her seat and pacing back and forth on the*



*plush carpeting. "You shouldn't hate Zefanya. You should be fucking over her—it's been years! You shouldn't be snapping at me when I mention of her name. Forget her! I'm sure she's forgotten about you and doesn't even think of you! Don't let her have a hold on your life, man. For someone who claims to hate her, you give her such importance by letting what she did to you affect your decision on other women. You have to move on!"*

*When Lisa didn't attempt to reason out or defend her side, Seulgi prodded on. "Am I right to assume that once your five year marriage to Jennie is over, you'll go back to pining on Zefanya again? Coz' that's what you were doing before you got married."*

**"No!"**

*Lisa denied. "I am not pining for her--never did. I don't give shit about her. I don't love her anymore. I'm fine with Jennie and with my life now." But no matter how fervidly she rebuffs Seulgi's allegation, in the back of her mind, she knows Niki has been the reason for all the meaningless dalliances she had with women and the reason for her hesitation to let her feelings free with Jennie.*

**"If that's the case then what the hell are you waiting for?"**

*Seulgi asked, waving her arms in the air in agitation.*

**"Either my brain is stuck somewhere in the horizon or you're enjoying asking me this ambiguous questions,"**

*Lisa snorted, pushing aside the stack of folders on her desk.*

**"Okay, okay—let me put it another way for your suddenly stupid brain,"**

*Seulgi stated, moving back into the seat she previously occupied. "Hypothetically, let's say—"*

**"Hypothetically?"**

*Lisa echoed her face clearly astounded by Seulgi's sudden utilization the word. "You know this word? What it means?"*

**"It means assumed for arguments sake. I hear Irene say it all the time."**

**"I'm—Bae? You and Bae—all the time?"**

**"Yeah, yeah, I've been making it up to her for saving my ass in the club—but don't change the subject."**

*Lisa raised both arms in surrender. "No wonder you're beginning to talk like her," she said under her breath.*

*Whether Seulgi heard it or not, she went back to her interrupted query. "Let's say, five years is done, your obligation to stay married to Jennie is over. You've had a happy five years with her but it's time to end things. Time to move on with your lives outside of the arranged marriage—what will you do then?"*

*Something in the casual way Seulgi had described the five years, hypothetical it may be, put Lisa in the scenario of what the future will be like. And Seulgi's simple question bothered her deeply. Just imagining a moment like that with Jennie, tugged at her heart and she silently asked herself, can she just let go after five years?*

**"Rearrange your marriage,"**

*Seulgi suggested when she did not answer.*

**"I can't do that! It's in her father's will!"**

*Seulgi shook her head letting Lisa know of her disappointment. "You know it's situations like this that make me wonder how the fuck you are able to manage a chain of business all over the country when a simple task of telling your wife that you don't want the marriage to last for five years only is so hard for you to grasp!"*

*Lisa was dumbfounded by the strong annoyance in Seulgi's tone and the fact that her usually I-could-care-less friend understands her situation with Jennie better than she does. And Seulgi even makes it sound so easy—maybe because it is. She was the one making things complicated by thinking way too much of their relationship and much as she hated to admit it, she had really let her experience with Niki cloud her decisions.*

**"You think . . . Nini will want to stay married to me past five years?"**

**"How should I know? I'm not Jennie. Ask her."**

Once the brunette swam within her reach, Lisa pulled Jennie close to her, feeling suddenly nervous of what she was about to suggest. She was supposed to ask her yesterday but she spent most of the day in the studio and when she came back that night, she was too exhausted to do anything but sleep. Lisa wanted to ask her earlier while they were in the master's bedroom but paint got in the way. Hopefully, she would get to ease into the subject now that they're alone and simply swimming at leisure.

**"You swim real well,"**

the Thai casually commented when the brunette settled next to her, their hips touching underwater.

**"You too. I love to swim though. It's sorta therapeutic after a stressful day at work and it's an excellent exercise. Kinda like how shopping is therapeutic too."**

Lisa chuckled.

**"Did you take lessons? Coz' I did."**

**"Shopping lessons? There's no such thing."**

Lisa laughed and lightly bumped her hips to hers, upsetting her balance a little but she quickly held on to her waist before she could slide sideways.

**"Swimming lessons!"**

**"Nah. My dad—he taught me."**

**"I see."**

Lisa quietly said, noticing the blank look on her wife's face at the mention of her father.

**"I used to watch you when you were swimming—you know, months back when we weren't exactly cordial with each other."**

Jennie's face enlivened in surprise.

**"You watch me?"**

She inquired

**dubiously. "If I remember correctly, you hated me."**

**"I never hated you,"**

Lisa objected, draping an arm over her shoulder and pulling Jennie to her chest.

**"I hated the idea of being forced to marry you but I had nothing against you. You, on the other hand . . . you hated me, didn't you?"**

Jennie shook her head.

**"Hate is such a strong word for someone you hardly know. I didn't hate you,"**

she admitted. She raked her fingers through her husband's wet hair and relished the feel of her taut body against her, all hard planes and angles.

**"You annoyed me so it was annoyance more than hatred. But it doesn't matter now because we're here at this time—you're hugging me. I'm hugging you back."**

**"Damn right."**

**"If we weren't forced to marry, we might have never met."**

**"Or maybe we would have met—who knows?"**

Lisa claimed.

**"We move in the same circle. Some of my peers know your friends. It's only a matter of time before our paths crossed."**

**"Maybe."**

**"One thing is sure though, had we met like that, I won't rest until I make you agree to go on a date with me."**

Jennie giggled at the resolve in her voice, angling her neck as Lisa dipped her head to kiss the curve of skin between her neck and shoulder.

**"But Lisa, you were really watching me before?"**

**"Hmmm..."**

the Thai intoned then as she lifted her head, she added,

**"I even dreamed about it . . . you were against the wall . . . I was supporting you up."**

**"What?"**

Jennie leaned away slightly to look at her face and determine if she was jesting or not.

**"Want me to demonstrate?"**

**"No—I'm just surprised."**

**"Don't be. That's the effect you have on me."**

**"How long did I have this effect on you?"**

the brunette asked as the Thai woman resumed the pleasurable task of kissing her neck and the underside of her jaw. They had never had conversations like this where there is reference to the first few months of the marriage, probably because they weren't as comfortable with each other the way they have been of late and thus assumed it would be an awkward topic. But it didn't look that way now that they're slowly easing into it.

Lisa paused the kissing to think and answered before pressing her lips back to her skin.

**"Since the night of the wedding."**

**"It's all about the sex, isn't it?"**

**"It was."**

**"And now?"**

**"It's more than that, Nini, and I know you are aware of it,"**

Lisa said. This time cupping her face with her hands.

**"You are, aren't you?"**

Jennie bit her lower lip.

**"Well, I always did think it was about the sex,"**

she averred but hurriedly continued when she saw a flash of affront in the Thai's eyes.

**"But after several instances that suggested otherwise, not anymore."**

**"Good."**

**"This is nice."**

**"What is?"**

**"Talking about our not so distant past."**

Lisa laughed warmly.

**"You know what would be nicer?"**

**"No, but I sense you're gonna tell me."**

**"To get out of the water. We're going to look like prunes if we stay in any longer."**

Jennie agreed and they swam over to the side of the pool where the steps were located. Lisa had foregone the use of the steps, using her

well muscled arms instead as leverage to push her body out of the water. Then she assisted Jennie as she climbed up from the pool.

They settled on one of the larger chaise chairs after drying themselves and lay side by side, facing each other. Their bodies automatically curved to fit the other like two pieces of a whole. Jennie had her head propped on Lisa's upper arm and she draped one leg over the Thai's left leg, the latter's free hand immediately resting on her thigh.

**"You're right. This is definitely nicer,"**

Jennie spoke first, snuggling closer to the warmth of Lisa's body.

**"Will you keep agreeing with me?"**

**"Why? What else do you want me to agree to?"**

**"Permanence."**

Lisa stated quietly but Jennie felt the gradual increase of her heartbeat and her body became tense, like she was anticipating with abated breath what her next words will be.

But the brunette has no idea what she means. Jennie raised her head up slightly to better see her face and maybe get a clue as to what she's trying to say.

**"Permanence of—what?"**

**"Status."**

The term lost in translation is probably apropos to describe the thought processing in her brain because nothing brilliant or logical is popping up at the moment.

**"Please stop the one-word clarification. It's confusing me even more,"**

Jennie complained.

**"What status are you talking about?"**

**"Our status,"**

Lisa simply replied, pulling her up a little so that their heads are at level and she can stare straight into her chocolate eyes.

**"I'm talking about permanence of our status."**

Silence followed. It was lengthy and, in a way, deafening. Even the distant sounds coming from somewhere in the house could be heard inside the pool area.

Once Jennie was sure the pool water did not impair her hearing, Jennie remained perfectly still in Lisa's arms—except for her heart that felt like will leap out of her chest any moment because of its erratic thumping.

Lisa's meaning became clear but she didn't dare move because, with all the doubt in her mind, she was preparing herself when she would suddenly say,

*Ha! The joke's on you, Nini!*

When minutes passed and Lisa didn't show any inclination to speak  
—

*much to her relief*

—she kept her eyes and the rest of her functioning senses focused on Lisa that even if an earthquake occurred or the chaise they were laying on suddenly gave out and crashed to the floor, she probably wouldn't even notice. She stared at her with uncertainty and wariness, searching the hazel depths of her eyes for whatever she could find in them to tell her she's being sincere and that her decision did not root out of obligation or guilt.

What she saw was hopefulness and, puzzlingly so, a hint of fear.

**"Do you plan on speaking anytime soon?"**

Lisa asked quietly but with a small smile tugging at the corner of her lips.



Still too shaken to put her thoughts into words, Jennie nodded her head. Just yesterday she had been worrying about her feelings for the Thai that had evolved into something more complicated and became difficult to contain. Yet as past experience dictates, she told herself not to put her heart on the line for something that won't even last.

She had always believed that if she became too happy, too settled and when things seem like they're going in her favor, something bad would happen that will make her suffer for being complacent. Her life has always been the good things compensated by the bad. And now that Lisa is suggesting on ending the major limiting factor of their personal relationship—something that she also wants—things couldn't get any better.

Which means that, from here on, things will get worse. But maybe, *just maybe*

, this one will be different.

Maybe her streak of failed relationships is about to change—all she has to do is take a chance. And lately, she's been thinking about what it would be like to actually be Mrs. Manoban for more than five years.

Jennie carefully untangled herself from her hold and sat up on the chaise next to her hip. She didn't think she could put what she's feeling into words until she kept her eyes trained on the tall woman and inquired somberly,

**"Are you like . . . sure?"**

There was no mistaking the Thai's firm reply. She looked like she already did a lot of thinking about it.

**"Yes."**

Lisa was watching her closely and the brunette could almost see the wheels of her mind working on trying to predict the next words that will come out of her mouth.

**"This may sound stupid but . . . I'm scared,"**

Jennie admitted on an undertone, her gaze dropping to the folded hands on her lap.

**"It's not stupid,"**

Lisa whispered back, lifting a hand to stroke her cheek in a tender caress as she sat up the chaise as well. She understands where she's coming from. They were not playing around the five year contract anymore—it will be long term. And it's like taking an enormous risk because this isn't about simply enjoying each other's company. It now means a lot more than that.

**"I'm scared too but I don't want to wake up one day wondering what could've been."**

**"But what if . . ."**

**"Nini, ever since we got married, there has been so many what if's, should be's, could be's and maybe's between us. We don't fall under the hearts-and-flowers or stars-in-your-eyes kind of couple—but hey, we're still here. That must account for something, right?"**

*How do you argue to a speech like that?*

Deciding she's thinking much too hard of something that could or could not happen, Jennie shoved her worries aside and let herself wallow in this moment which means a whole lot more to her than their lavish wedding in Italy.

A half smile grazed her lips and then she met her husband's eyes again.

**"Will anything change between us?"**

**"I don't see why anything should change. I kinda like how we are—unless you plan on being a shrewish wife."**

**"And you, an impossible husband?"**

Lisa laughed heartily and enfolded her in a tight embrace.

**"I promise not to be impossible . . . if you promise not to be a shrew."**

Jennie closed her eyes and her arms found its way around Lisa's shoulders to reciprocate the embrace. She tucked her face in the crook of her neck then said,

**"I promise."**

**"So does this mean you take me again as your husband?  
Outside of the five year agreement?"**

Wearing a wet and skimpy swimsuit, cradled in Lisa's arms who donned her board shorts and sitting on a plain white chaise inside a less than elegant pool area, Jennie recited the same words she said to her during their wedding.

**"I do."**

But this time . . . Jennie didn't force herself to say it.

## [19] Stirrings - M!

*After several attempts at knocking and probably even pounding the base of her fisted hands on the white wood bedroom door, she finally stopped. And next she heard a faint thud on the door which means she leaned against it or she was lightly banging her forehead on the smooth wood.*

*She can do whatever she wants, for as long as she likes, but she swore to herself she will not dignify her efforts with a response. There was nothing to say. She had nothing to say and as of this time, she has no desire to see her face or hear what she intends to make her understand.*

**"I deserve your hatred . . . I deserve every bit of anger you're feeling right now but please hear me out . . ."**

*She was begging. And normally her heart would tug at the sound of her pleading but not today.*

*Anger surfaced foremost than any other feeling. It was anger for being made to look pathetic—waiting for her to arrive, longing to see her again and bursting with excitement for their future which she was so certain would begin tonight the moment she says yes—and it was anger because she was suddenly thrust into a position of a what can be called as 'cuckolded'.*

*How could she have done this to her? When just yesterday while they talked on the phone, she sounded so animated like she couldn't wait to fly back and see her and she even has no qualms about saying I love you to her. Didn't that mean anything? Just say I love you for the heck of it?*

*If the sight of the ring on her finger startled and shocked her earlier then made her livid . . . now, five hours later after fleeing from the airport in an angry daze, locked in her room with every memento that reminded her of her thrown all over the floor, she felt as if a strong hand is wrenching her heart in the most painful way possible.*

*Would a patient undergoing a heart operation while she's wide awake be*

*in the same degree of the pain she was feeling right now? She doubts it. But it doesn't make her pain any less excruciating.*

*She felt stupid, gullible—a complete and utter fool for believing in love. For believing she's still in love.*

*Needing to release her riotous emotions, she grabbed the picture frame on the bedside table of a close up shot of their happy faces pressed cheek to cheek, giving it a look filled with pain and resentment before she hurled it toward the closed door. The wood frame and the glass covering shattered as it hit the door and the broken pieces landed a little ways from the door.*

*The loud crashing sound made her resume knocking. "Please let me in, Lisa."*

*She continued to ignore her. She had to.*

*What did she do wrong? As far as she knew, they were fine. Nothing happened between the last time they got together to this day that would suggest otherwise. Sure, they hated the distance but there was only one more year to go then they'll be living together as originally planned.*

*It was a plan they both agreed on. She didn't force the idea on her—in fact it was her suggestion. Couldn't she wait for another year more?*

*But if she engaged herself to another man, that means she had been cheating on her for—she has no idea how long exactly but it must be going on for a while now for her to accept such proposal. Because no guy in their right mind would propose to a girl he had just met.*

*The pain in her heart just doubled.*

*Her voice drifted through the closed door. "Lisa . . . I want to explain. Please . . ." Lisa remained seated on the bed, staring at the door but seeing nothing, her back stiff, her hands were clenched into fists and her jaw taut.*

**"Niki, what's going on?"**

*It was her mother's voice. "Lisa! Open the door." Like any mother who suddenly finds her daughter's girlfriend of four years banging against her*

daughter's door and looking distraught, she was very confused and very worried.

**"I want to explain to Lisa, Alicia. I owe her that...but she—"**

**"But she doesn't want to talk to you! You bi—"**

**"Seulgi!"**

*Alicia Manoban exclaimed in shock at the sudden appearance of Seulgi and the unexpected anger evident in her tone and facial expression as she marched straight at Niki. She intercepted Seulgi before she could step any closer to her daughter's girlfriend and do something she would regret later on. She grabbed her arm and dragged her backwards. "I will not allow any vulgarity or violence in my house, Seulgi, so calm down and start explaining what's happening here!"*

*Seulgi shook her head, her body slowly going pliant as she leaned on the wall Alicia pushed her against. Apart from looking like she just got spit out by a hurricane, she also looked disheartened but the anger in her eyes directed at her best friend's girlfriend never waned one bit. "You couldn't have chosen a better time."*

**"I'm sorry . . ."**

**"Sorry for what?! For being a two-timing bitch?!"**

*Alicia gasped next to Seulgi letting the profane word pass to look at the girl by the door in disbelief. But she withheld judgment since the facts are still not clear.*

**"She was gonna ask you tonight!"**

*Seulgi's laugh was edged with ire, incredulity and disappointment. "But I guess the other guy was quicker and you are a fucking good actress Miss Niki Zefanya."*

*When Alicia spoke again, she was no longer worried. The hand that was restraining Seulgi slipped off as she walked closer to the girl her daughter loves. She didn't look distraught to her anymore. "Niki, you should go. I don't think Lisa wants to hear what you will say right now."*



surprised as much as she was curious of the reason behind such behavior.

**"Do you take drugs on occasion?"**

*The small girl inquired out of the blue, eyeing Lisa peculiarly from head to toe before browsing through a rack full of women's clothing.*

**"No."**

*Lisa replied casting Irene a look that clearly says 'you-are-crazy'.*

**"On medication for some illness?"**

**"Neither."**

**"Are you sick or something?"**

**"I feel great actually. What's with the neurotic questions?"**

**"Ehh . . . because we've been shopping for hours and I'm still waiting to hear you complain."**

**"And your point is?"**

**"You're a girl who acts like a guy so practically you possess a guy's level of patience."**

**"And so?"**

**"We're shopping—it's a well known fact in the universe that male and shopping don't go together."**

**"I'm not a male."**

**"Well you're not but you have that 'male part' so you're somehow on that category already."**

*Lisa smirked. "Nini loves to shop."*

**"Which means—what?"**



*The befuddlement in Irene's face was only answered by a mysterious grin before Lisa walked past her and went into one of the fitting rooms where Jennie was.*

And when they parted ways with Irene and went back to the mansion, they had an intimate dinner before retiring to her room. But contrary to what the rest of the household assumed they would do inside the room, they enjoyed their alone time cuddled together, watching a marathon of movies until sleep overcame their senses.

Jennie was actually glad that last night Lisa didn't incline to having sex with her as some sort of celebration for another leap into their relationship as a married couple. Although, there were several times when the kissing became quite intense but before it got out of Lisa's control, she would stop.

The picnic and even the Thai's patience to tag along while they shopped, for her, was a better way to instigate the permanence of their status because her husband proved yet again that she's more than just a sexual conquest and that her desire to extend their agreement past five years is based on genuine liking for her and the companionship they have.

It was Jennie's reason for agreeing to stay married to her past five years. And just knowing that she's on the same page as her, means that they're in this marriage now for the right reasons.

**"Let me help you with that,"**

Jennie offered, moving between the Thai woman and the sink and taking the wet small towel from her hand.

Lisa looked hesitant for a brief second before her hands gripped the curve of her waist and sat her up on the marble so that they were almost at eye level.

**"You've done this before?"**

She nodded and used her other hand to even out the cream lather she already has on her face.

**"Who?"**

Lisa asked not satisfied by a mere nod.

**"My father."**

**"Which means that was a long time ago."**

Jennie frowned and tipped her head sideways noting that her husband looked rather perturbed.

**"Yeaah,"**

She said.

**"I'm pretty adept at this, Lisa. Don't worry. I've been putting shaving cream on my father before and was shaving it also. So far, blood was not shed."**

**"Okay . . . cream away then,"**

Lisa breathed. But at the back of her mind she was remembering the last time a woman had helped her with this kind of things. Niki tried before but ended up hurting her cheek then. She wasn't superstitious nor did she believe in signs but that instance was the last

*couple thing*

they did before she came back and was already engaged to another man.

Jennie chuckled, resting her free hand on her shoulder and giving it a light squeeze silently telling her to relax. "

**Who do you look like most? Your mom or dad?"**

She conversationally said to divert her thoughts as the brunette stroked her hand with cream up her neck.

**"Both . . . I think..."**

Lisa replied, very much conscious of the soft palms grazing against her skin. She was almost sure the next glide of Jennie's wonderful

hands will make her tremble but she tried her best to talk with her so that she won't notice her unease.

**"Why do you ask?"**

Jennie shrugged, intent on the task she was doing.

**"Nothing really . . . just curious where the good looks come from."**

The reason for Lisa's apprehension steadily ebbed as a slow smile of pleasure worked its way across her face at the nonchalant way she had complimented her face.

**"Is that one way of telling me you find me very attractive?"**

Jennie stopped, straightened and gazed at her as if she was making up her mind whether or not she meant it as an accolade.

**"I guess so—yes."**

Then she went back to massaging her face.

**"It's kinda hard to miss your good looks, Lisa. Even Irene acknowledges that for a girl, you're very attractive to the female population."**

**"Now that's something I don't hear everyday."**

Lisa chuckled as she inspected Jennie's lovely image so close to her face and it occurred to her, her wife really is adroit with what she's doing like she claims. She relaxed under her ministrations.

**"You know, I will never get how you are friends with her."**

Jennie rinsed her face with a wet face towel and smiled.

**"Irene maybe a little flamboyant most times but she's a great person and a wonderful friend. She's been my savior during those awkward high school days—making me look less nerdy, setting me up on dates and defending me from bullies, along with Mino of course."**

**"Mino?"**

Finishing up, Jennie dabbed her face with a dry towel suddenly realizing, with all the issues she's had to deal with concerning their relationship and to add to that, the trouble with Chaerin and maybe because it never really came up at any time whenever they're together, that she still hasn't told Lisa about the other person she and Irene grew up with.

Jennie adjusted her butt on the marble and laid the towel aside.

**"Remember the night of our wedding, when you assumed I was with another guy in the room . . ."**

She haltingly replied.

**"That was Mino."**

Lisa's expression didn't change but the amiability in her clear hazel eyes had already disappeared.

**"Yes, I remember that."**

But more than recalling, that night was quite hard to forget.

**"Who is he?"**

**"He's my brother."**

This time Lisa's brows met.

**"You're an only child."**

**"I am."**

While Lisa looked like she was still absorbing the piece of information she relayed, Jennie prodded on,

**"Mino's mom is my mother's distant relative. She left him with my parents and never came back. He was still a baby so my parents decided to, in a way, adopt him before I was even born. It wasn't a legal adoption that's why her last name is**

**Song from her mother's korean name. But I grew up treating him like a brother."**

Jennie bit her lip anxiously and tried to gauge Lisa's reaction.

**"You're mad at me for not telling you sooner."**

It sounded more like a question than a statement.

**"No."**

Lisa said, unsure how she's supposed to take in the clarification of Mino's persona in relation to Jennie when all she could remember of the guy was, he's inside the honeymoon suite with her bride and he was the reason for the rage she felt at that time.

**"Where is he now?"**

**"I honestly don't know."**

Jennie placed her hands on the tall woman's arms that rested idly on her robe covered thigh, her fingers unconsciously playing with the nerve endings of the Thai's inner elbows.

**"He works for UNICEF so most of the time he's in the remotest, most deprived places on the map."**

**"I see,"**

Lisa murmured. She didn't know yet what to make of Jennie's

*adopted brother*

whose obviously a good person and even works for the betterment of children's lives all over the world. But what she's sure of is feeling relieved Song Mino is only a brother.

**"You don't look okay to hear this."**

Lisa smiled at her wife's worried face and circled her arms on her waist.

**"I'm just surprised and curious about him. I mean, he's your**

**brother,"**

she stated before another thought came to mind.

**"Did he attend our wedding?"**

**"No . . . Chaerin didn't want him invited and I was too upset then that I didn't really care who attended the wedding."**

**"But he was there—you were talking to him that night."**

**"Irene. She called him. I'm glad she did. He came in very late that's why he went straight to the room to see me."**

Lisa slowly nodded. It seemed to her that Jennie and Irene have such a high regard for this Mino. It wasn't a big deal to her since it appears they all grew up together. However—she doesn't know why exactly—she has to admit knowing about Mino bothers her somehow.

Jennie tipped her head, considered her silence for a moment then gave her a tiny smile as if to apologize for not telling her about Mino sooner.

**"You will meet him when he comes—I don't know when that is coz he has a habit of just popping up when we least expect him,"**

she said with certainty.

**"I look forward to that day then."**

This time when Jennie smiled, it was radiant and her eyes regained the entrancing glow it had earlier.

**"Thank you,"**

she whispered, leaning close to Lisa to plant a kiss on her newly freshen jaw.

Lisa turned her face so that her lips landed on her lips, settling her mouth quickly over hers, her hands sliding up her back. The

pressure of her mouth increased as her hand went up further and curved around the brunette's nape, fingers tangling into her damp hair. Jennie readily responded, opening her mouth to the Thai's questing tongue and drawing her upper body closer to hers.

When Lisa pulled back, there was a glimmer of mischief and glee in Jennie's eyes.

**"I don't feel like going to work today."**

Jennie knows where her husband's getting at and frankly, the brunette didn't want to go to the studio either. She pulled on a shocked expression but jokingly uttered,

**"You need to work to feed your wife!"**

Her jest was so outrageous that Lisa felt double urges to kiss her wife again and laugh. So she did both before saying,

**"You sound like you're already a pregnant wife!"**

As Jennie laughed along with the Thai, the oversized robe slipped off her shoulder, exposing the tan skin. She pulled it back in place but Lisa stopped her by restraining her hand and kissing the bare skin.

**"I just realized I don't know how to be a wife,"**

Jennie retorted as though it was a belated realization, her arms looped around Lisa's neck in silent urging to her pleasurable kisses.

**"You're doing just fine,"**

Lisa mumbled in between light nips on her shoulder while one hand blindly found the knot of her robe and was slowly pulling to untie it.

**"How do you know this—have you had a wife before?"**

Smirking against her smooth skin, the tall woman countered her query with a question of her own.

**"How do you know you're not doing fine as a wife—have you been one before?"**

Jennie seemed to give it some thought before capitulating.

**"Okay, you win. Point taken."**

**"I have no idea how to be a husband either."**

**"Don't worry . . . you're doing just fine."**

Unable to suppress a grin, Lisa went back to grazing her lips on her inviting skin and parting the opening of her robe to expose the rest of her. Her lips and the shivers of delight it brought up her spine kept her occupied that it barely registered on Jennie that Lisa was already carrying her out of the bathroom and into their unmade bed.

Except Lisa didn't take her to the bed as she thought.

Lisa gently placed her on top of her desk which was closer to the bathroom than their bed. Then, she divested the towel off her arms, unhooked her bra and she was swiftly rid of her thong and then the towel secured around Lisa's waist fell next to it on the floor.

The dark stormy hue of Lisa's eyes was proof of the primitive yearning coursing through her veins. Keeping her gaze locked to the brunette's eyes who mirrored the same wanton desires she was feeling, Lisa parted her legs and fingers plunged into her wet womanly folds. She cried out and braced her hands on the desk behind her.

Lisa found her center and stroked, stroked with increasing purpose and speed.

**"Let it go, Nini."**

She said, loving the sight of her completely naked and writhing in desire because of her.

**"I—please—it's lonely this way, Lisa."**



Jennie panted urgently but with a note of frustration even as she was arching her hips against her hand.

**"I want you inside . . . me."**

Lisa's eyes darkened even more until they looked almost black. And in answer to her plea, she ceased the assault of her fingers and roughly pulled her hips closer to the edge of the desk bunching the robe underneath her bare buttocks. Lisa bent her head and her mouth quickly latched on her nipple, suckling on it, tightening inexorably and increasing the drawing pressure until piercing stabs of lust were zing-zinging through her entire body.

One of Jennie's braced hands lifted from the desk and held the back of her head, fingers tangling through the soft hair as she pressed the Thai's face closer to her breast—until she felt the latter grip hard on her hips and suddenly entered her with a quick, hard thrust. Jennie moaned loudly at the rush of pleasure and her legs instinctively wrapped around Lisa's waist pushing her rigid erection deeper.

But the Thai remained steady, unmoving while completely embedded in her.

**"I can't get enough of you,"**

Lisa said hoarsely before she circled her hips against her in a slow and gentle grinding rhythm that made Jennie frantic with need.

**"Even when you're this close to me . . . this exposed . . ."**

**"No—"**

Jennie groaned, jerking her hips to let her know how she wants the pace. But Lisa clamped her arms around her lower back to stop her from moving and continued to deliberately torture her with her languid grinding.

**"Lisa—I can't stand this!"**

Ignoring the pulsating ache of her shaft, Lisa pressed her face next to her ears and whispered,

**"I cannot touch you enough to satisfy my craving for you . . ."**

**"Ohh Lisa . . ."**

The raspy sweetness of her words added more to Jennie's throbbing need and when those plump lips descended to her neck, biting the particular spot that drove her crazy, her eyes closed, she threw her head back and arched her body even more.

**"Stop . . . teas—"**

Lisa smothered the rest of her words when in one smooth motion she lifted her head from her neck and kissed her lips with raw hunger.

**"I want you,"**

she whispered again, her delicious lips moving back and forth on hers.

**"I need you."**

Jennie's heart involuntarily leapt from the slow gyrating heat of the Thai's penis and the erotic but engaging words that were spilling from her mouth. It made her dizzy with wanting and elated with pleasure other than the physical. She forced her eyes open to gaze at Lisa. Her face so beautifully handsome, so seductive as it was hard and dark with passion and she felt the tense muscles on her shoulders and arms brought on by the strain of holding back on her body's rampant desire.

With absolute gentleness, the brunette touched her palms to the Thai's cheek, and murmured throatily,

**"I need you too."**

Despite the cloud of lust, Jennie knows her need for her goes beyond what she originally intended. It goes beyond being a guarantee to get her inheritance. But in part, it was also a physical need, especially at this particular second.

**"Lisa . . . right now, please . . ."**

A low groan erupted from Jennie's chest a split second before she felt Lisa push roughly into her, withdraw almost all the way only to plunge back higher, deeper, wider. It was forceful, erotic and amazing all at the same time that Jennie lost her thoughts the moment it began. The sudden change from stillness to uncontrollable thrusting wrung a moan of pure pleasure from her. She let her emotions and desires take over—reaching for her husband, kissing her, tightly clinging to her sinewy shoulders and offering herself back to her.

With each enormous lunge, tension built within her. The Thai's deep strokes increased steadily and Jennie was almost certain Lisa was atoning for teasing her minutes ago by making sure she reaches an amazing explosion of ecstasy.

Streaks of white hot pleasure began rippling through her coming in faster and faster each time. With hazy eyes, they watched each other's face, their frantic gasps in tune with the movements of their lower bodies and a short while later . . . the violence of their release exploded a second after the other. It tore a scream from Jennie's throat that was quickly muffled by Lisa's mouth kissing her desperately before she pushed into her one last time and joined her in sweet rapture.

As tension gradually left their sweaty bodies, they remained on the desk wrapped in a tender embrace, still intimately joined . . . foreheads resting against the other, breathing labored, bodies limp but wonderfully sated.

When Lisa's intake of air finally evened out, she kissed the brunette's swollen lips once and traced the graceful curve of her cheek.

**"I still can't believe you're mine,"**

she huskily declared.

**"But I'm so glad that you are."**



**"Reserve a table for four people."**

**"Yes, Ms. Manoban."**

**"Direct Ms. Bae and Ms. Kang to that table when they arrive."**

**"Uhh . . . of course Ms. Manoban but . . ."**

**"Changbin, where's that noise coming from?"**

Lisa asked the maitre d' of Lawry's The Prime Rib when she entered the dining area from the back door that led to her office and heard the sound of raised voices coming from somewhere in the restaurant that seemed like two people—male and female—arguing.

Changbin, usually composed, calm and collected as her job dictates, looked at Lisa with anxiousness and apology before answering.

**"The booth at the left most corner, Ms. Manoban."**

It was one of the best tables in the restaurant because it's partially hidden from the rest of the tables therefore offered much privacy to guests who need them. Usually celebrities or some people who do not wish to be seen with a certain companion reserve that table.

**"Who are they?"**

Lisa asked then quickly changed her mind seeing the rest of the afternoon diners were being disrupted by the noise.

**"I take that back—I don't care who they are. If they don't stop tell them we'll be forced to make them leave."**

**"Yes, Ms. Manoban,"**

Changbin concurred but cautiously added,

**"Err . . . but I think you should know, Ma'am, it's your good friend Ms. Kang and your wife's friend Ms. Bae who are seated at that table."**

Lisa paused and her forehead creased with a bit of surprise.

**"How long?"**

She asked.

**"Ms. Bae arrived five minutes before Ms. Kang."**

**"How long have they been arguing?"**

Changbin checked his wristwatch before replying.

**"Ten minutes as we speak."**

Heaving an annoyed breath, Lisa dismissed Changbin and turned in the direction of the table. As she came nearer, the indiscernible words were gradually beginning to become clear and by the time she reached the two she had a pretty good idea what the dispute was about.

**"I saved your helpless ass that night!"**

Irene clamored, her face flushed with ire and her hands were braced at the table that separated her from Seulgi.

**"And this is the gratitude I get?! You really are an ass!"**

**"Hayoung—Sunmi, fuck, whatever her name is, told me she put the drugs on the drink she thought I ordered for you!"**

Seulgi countered in her own indignant voice.

**"Technically, it's your fault why I got drugged. You owe me more than I owe you."**

**"I don't know why the fuck you even think that girl—whom you can't even remember the name—has a drop of useful intelligence in her brain!"**

**"She told me herself last night!"**

**"After you fucked her brains out, no doubt, and for lack of witty conversation she confessed her idiotic attempt at drugging you by saying it was really me she's after! You're the**

**one who told her to go, not me!"**

**"But you're the reason why I told her to leave us! You insisted on seeing me, asked people of my whereabouts that day—which, by the way, is fucking unusual for you so naturally I think, you have something important to tell me!"**

**"Oh will you shut the hell up! We've been over this three times already! She's your date—whether or not I influenced your decision, you still had the last say!"**

Lisa moved closer, feeling the unpleasant air between the two. The Thai stood adjacent to the table and deliberately cleared her throat to get their attention. To her surprise, it worked. Irene swung her fired up gaze first followed by Seulgi's disgusted ones.

**"I hate to interrupt but loud disputes like what you two are having right now is not good for business,"**

Lisa reminded in a businesslike manner.

**"Where's Jennie?"**

Irene demanded.

**"She arranges this little get together without telling me why and she's not with you! I'd rather eat live cockroaches than spend my time with you two."**

The good mood the Thai was riding on since this morning kept her from rising to the small girl's pointed insult. Lisa merely grinned at her as she slipped next to Seulgi and coolly said,

**"She's at back in my office. She had to talk to Sana about some photos. She'll join us a while."**

Irene eyed her with a mixture of surprise and annoyance. She was expecting a verbal backlash from the Thai woman but she seems to be enveloped in a cloud of unnatural joy that if she suddenly breaks out into song and dance to express how happy she is, it wouldn't come as a shocker anymore.

**"You're entirely too—smiley,"**

Irene commented, observing the Thai's obviously happy disposition.

Seulgi had the same observation and he voiced it out as well.

**"Yeah."**

It was the very first thing they agreed on since arriving at the restaurant.

**"Did you just fuck in your office?"**

**"I'm glad I can make you two agree on something,"**

Lisa joked.

**"I would say disgusting but then that's like insulting my best friend too,"**

Irene enunciated, her face contorted in a grimace. She seemed to have forgotten the raging argument she was having with Seulgi.

**"Word of advice Manoban, consider a break once in a while. At the rate you're going, the pill she's taking might lose its affectivity."**

**"It pains me to say this...but she has a point,"**

Seulgi concurred.

Again, instead of being irritated, Lisa reacted by laughing affably.

**"So what if it doesn't take effect? Then she gets pregnant. But for your information, we did not fuck in my office."**

Seulgi grabbed Lisa's shoulder all of a sudden to better see her smiling countenance.

**"Damn! You finally did it?"**

Irene was slightly more violent than Seulgi. She jumped off her seat, glared menacingly and wagged a finger with its glittery purple

polished nail at Lisa.

**"Sex is obviously not a new experience for you, Manoban, but it is for Jennie. The allure of sex for her does not include getting pregnant—not at this time and certainly not with you!"**

**"Why not with me? I'm her husband."**

**"Temporary husband,"**

Irene corrected scathingly, looking at the Thai pointedly.

The smirk that was ever present on Lisa's lips widened into a genial smile. She leaned back on the booth, crossed her arms over her chest and patiently waited for Irene to sit down again before saying,

**"Not anymore."**

**"Wise move, dude!"**

Seulgi patted her on the back, visibly pleased by her best friend's decision.

To Lisa's surprise, Irene sat speechless for several minutes. It was the first time she's ever seen the blond run out of words spilling from her mouth that if she didn't know any better, she'd think the small woman's having an internal seizure.

When Irene finally conjured something to say, she came off surprisingly calm.

**"Is that the reason for this get together? Telling us that you're in this marriage for good?"**

**"Yes."**

**"When did this happen?"**

**"Yesterday."**

Irene carefully slid from the booth.

**"Did you say Jennie is in your office?"**



**"Yes . . . why?"**

Irene grabbed her bag and announced,

**"I'm going to have a talk with for not telling me about this yesterday!"**

Lisa stood up quickly to catch up with her, seeing the ire in her eyes.

**"Irene...don't flip out. We both agreed to tell you and Seulgi at the same time."**

She stopped, whirled around and said,

**"Don't worry, Manoban, I will murder you next."**

## [20] Our Family

When Lisa said they were going away for the weekend, Jennie did not expect to travel approximately 672 miles by air and find herself in Jeju walking through the foyer of the stately Manoban home, greeted by her relatives who were temporarily rendered speechless upon seeing them.

The same worried feelings she felt when Patrick Manoban came to the mansion are interplaying inside her, only this time it's not for the same reasons. She's part of this family now. No longer temporary. But it was like meeting for the first time ... because in a way she is. In New Zealand, the faces in attendance, whether family or friends, were all a blur to her.

That's why she feels like an ice cream melting under the heat of the sun due to the assessing stares directed her way.

And her husband, who's responsible for this surprise vacation, for some reason, is mentally unable to help with her predicament.

Jennie glanced anxiously at Lisa, who looked completely unaware of her panic and disorientation. In fact, she seems to have her mind wandering to another matter outside of the huge living room they were currently seated in along with eight other people who are looking at Jennie with obvious scrutiny.

Amused scrutiny but scrutiny nonetheless. Like a panel of judges—and she's the talentless contestant desperate for a positive remark.

Even the little girl, hovering in front of her, with doe-like eyes, curly locks tucked neatly under a red headband with an intricate ribbon design on one side and a colorful dress to match—she looks like a doll in her opinion—was subjecting Jennie with curious observation.

Under the guise of a tremulous smile, she carefully expelled a

nervous breath and imperceptibly squeezed Lisa's hand that was laced with her own to snap the Thai out of her reverie. She did come out of it, but it was because her phone vibrated in her pants pocket. Lisa apologized for the call, excused herself and let go of Jennie's hand as she stood up to leave the room.

*Don't leave!*

Jennie's mind screamed at Lisa's retreating back.

*I'm only good with families when they want a photo taken!*

*Think happy thoughts . . .*

*All things nice . . .*

Conspicuously alone, Jennie was very much tempted to follow Lisa outside but instead she drew on courage she didn't know she had and lifted her eyes—which she's trying hard not to show the uneasiness in them—to the other occupants in the room.

Jennie let her eyes stray to the people staring at her, landing first on Marco Manoban with his serious face and unwavering gaze looked like he was weighing down the merits of throwing her for the guillotine. Jennie quickly shook off the gory idea and gazed at Lisa's uncle, Ted, who is Marco's brother. He had a less somber face but like his wife Anne who sat next to him, he looked expressionless that she didn't know what to make of him.

The two teenagers in the room, Ted's children, Chloe and Nate, were looking at Jennie with curious eyes. They seemed to be noting everything about her from head to toe, trying to spot any flaw they could find. She was suddenly worried about her clothes—tight jeans and an off-white vintage blouse—not at all presentable for meeting with families but again it was Lisa's fault.

She didn't tell her.

*Damn that woman! What's taking her so long?!*

Then there was Adam, Lisa's cousin from his father's side of the family, who looked about a few years younger than Lisa and was

regarding her passively like he was bored out of his skull, wanting to be anywhere but here.

Trying not to squirm as much, Jennie opted to meet Alicia's gaze since her smiling face, that's unbelievably stunning for someone her age, looked more welcoming than the rest of the group even if her eyes watched her with veiled puzzlement.

While the little girl, Stella, padded away to sit next to Adam, Jennie fervently wished for Patrick to appear from the door and dispel the uncomfortable silence that has been looming over them with his outrageous remarks. But that wish is as impossible as her husband finishing the call soon. She has to fend for herself.

And she has to say something—that much she knew—they were expecting her to talk first that's why they are keeping silent and amusing themselves by staring at her.

*What will she say?*

The introductions were made by Lisa when they arrived a few minutes ago. She's a bundle of nerves and if this keeps up, she's certain she will swoon or worse, throw up in front of them.

Definitely not a pretty sight and not one to gain a good impression from the people considered family by Lisa . . . which technically is her family too.

As if the older woman sensed her uncertainty, Alicia softly cleared her throat and spoke pleasantly,

**"You look even more beautiful than the last I saw you, Jennie."**

Jennie blushed instantly at the compliment but a grateful smile showed on her face for the thoughtful gesture of her mother-in-law.

**"T-thank you, Mrs. Manoban."**

She stammered after swallowing past the lump in her throat. Then she realized that if she just ended it at that, the uneasy silence beforehand will settle on them again. Keeping a smile plastered to her face, Jennie thought of something witty to say and in her

mental frenzy she said the only thought that popped to mind.

**"There are eight of you."**

The blond girl, Chloe, seated on the armrest of the couch gawked at the comment before she erupted in giggles which earned her a censorious glance from his parents.

Inwardly groaning and mentally strangling her herself for the stupid comment, Jennie bit her lip and lowered her gaze.

*Great! Now they know I can count.*

*The ground should open and swallow her whole!*

That would be easier for all, her especially.

But Chloe stood from the armrest, strode over to one of the single couch chairs closest to Jennie and amended,

**"Sorry."**

**"No. I'm sorry. That was a pretty lame of me,"**

Jennie said, dismissing the young girl's apology with a shy smile. "

**I—this is my first time—"**

She nervously played with her hands trying to think of an appropriate word to explain her quailing emotions.

**"To meet, uhh—I think I should just have said something about the weather."**

Chloe grinned.

**"Oh yeah, definitely. According to the guide book, the weather is always a good topic to start with."**

**"What guide book?"**

It was Marco who spoke next, asking the question Jennie was about

to say. He threw a skeptical glance at the girl who was his niece.

She gave him a disbelieving look as if such guidebook is a matter of common knowledge and those who aren't familiar with it are considered dim-witted.

**"Guide Book for In-laws First Time to Meet the Parents and Other Relatives—that guidebook."**

The room burst in unexpected laughter. And one way or another, it cleared the awkward air in the room including most of Jennie's edginess. Lisa also came back into the room when the laughs were already subsiding, sitting herself next to Jennie and lacing their fingers again.

**"What's so funny?"**

She asked.

**"Nothing you'd be interested in,"**

Nate answered with a chuckle.

**"But I think we scared Jennie by coming here in numbers."**

**"Oh god, yes!"**

Jennie admitted on a nervous breath, her hands flying over her beating heart to which all of them found as another good source for laughter. Unbeknownst to Jennie, her unaffected candor just won over the family's appreciation for her.

**"Wait till you see the entire cavalry! It will be hard for you to remember names."**

**"Don't worry, Jennie, they're harmless."**

Marco rejoined with assurance, leaning against the soft cushions and draping an arm over Alicia Manoban's shoulders, affectionately squeezing on it.

**"Patrick is the scary one."**

**"Dad, that's not exactly true,"**

Lisa objected, his eyes smiling into Jennie's now less panicky ones.

**"Nini will disagree with you on that."**

**"Really?"**

**"But he's scary!"**

Chloe insisted which was agreed on by her father.

**"He scares everyone here in Jeju."**

**"He's like a totem pole,"**

Nate added.

**"What?!"**

Chloe retorted, extracting a round pillow behind her and throwing it at her brother who easily caught it.

**"You're overflowing with stupidity."**

**"Totem poles recount clan lineages and notable events in history—Grandpa's wrinkles tells quite a story just like a totem pole."**

Adam cast her a weird look then addressed Jennie.

**"Believe me when I say, she's not the genius in the family."**

Chloe rolled her eyes, reminding Jennie of Irene.

**"Nate, did you fry your brain and serve it for breakfast? Your analogy is killing me—just zip it will you?"**

**"Guys. Not now,"**

Anne scolded mildly.

**"Whatever. Grandpa is scary."**

Jennie was giggling at their repartee, forgetting all about her anxiety over meeting them but her loyalty to Patrick made her speak out.

**"But—I think Grandpa is adorable."**

No doubt shocking everyone in the room, except Lisa, but especially Alicia who knows how mulish and intimidating his father-in-law can be, more so now at his age than before.

**"Told you,"**

Lisa snorted, grinning at her family and feeling inexplicably proud of her wife who, as her parents are slowly realizing, effortlessly got the stamp of approval from Patrick Manoban that others only wished they could have.

**"First time I heard that,"**

Ted murmured, shooting an amused look at Marco.

From her position in the couch, Alicia noted the warmth in her daughter's smile as she looked at Jennie. She still couldn't believe what she's seeing but she will admit...she likes it very much.

Her father-in-law has been tight lipped about his stay with the newly married pair, saying nothing more than

**"It was okay."**

Or

**"I might visit them again."**

Leading to her assume, along with Marco, that Lisa really did not exert any effort to make the marriage work—she couldn't blame her though.

But when they arrived earlier, hand in hand, faces glowing with happiness and she even caught the brief yet affectionate kiss Lisa pressed on Jennie's temple, she was so surprised by the romantic air surrounding the two that she almost forgot how delighted she is to



be visited by her elusive daughter and how pleased that she will finally get a chance to be better acquainted with her new daughter-in-law.

**"As you can see, we're all surprised Jennie,"**

Anne said.

**"Shocked is more like it,"**

Marco revised if only to reinforce their claim about Patrick being scary—since he also agrees his father scared him years back and still does on occasion—but she was actually observing the same things about the pair that his wife was seeing.

While Chloe and Nate seem to have found something else to argue about both excusing themselves to wander off to another part of the house, Anne nodded at Marco but before she could say another word the familiar click of the cane echoed inside the living room quickly followed by Patrick's impatient voice, talking to a servant,

**"Where are they? Why didn't anybody tell me sooner? Stop pulling my arm! I can walk!"**

Except for Adam and Stella who was busy combing her doll, everyone stood when Patrick entered the room. It was like welcoming the arrival of a king and giving respect to his position in the family. But while most were a bit tense, namely Marco, Ted and Anne, Jennie, in a leap of joy at seeing the old man again, moved away from Lisa's side to meet Patrick halfway through the living room.

**"Grandpa!"**

She greeted exuberantly, carefully throwing her arms around Patrick in a hug to which he returned without hesitation.

**"I missed you!"**

**"This is real right?"**

Anne whispered to Alicia, unable to believe the pleasant change in

Patrick's demeanor at the sight of Jennie and the affectionate way the two were exchanging greetings.

Alicia slowly nodded, stunned as the rest, then her face split into a delighted smile.

**"We're not dreaming . . . but I can always pinch you if you like."**

Patrick laughed which seems to have a rusty quality to it probably from disuse and allowed Jennie to lead him toward the couches where the rest were waiting for their chance to greet him.

**"I'm sure you didn't,"**

the old man said with underlying humor.

**"You were busy. I can tell."**

As Jennie's cheeks flushed, Lisa also strode over to her grandfather to join her wife in greeting him.

**"Yes, Grandpa, we were busy but we really did miss you."**

Patrick pulled back slightly and noted Jennie's face with a thoughtful frown.

**"She's treating you right?"**

He tipped his head in Lisa's direction causing the younger woman to shake her head.

Giggling, Jennie leaned forward and whispered to Patrick while the rest of the people in the room watched in fascination. When she straightened, a smile slowly crept its way on the old guy's face that grew wider and more pleasant as the seconds ticked past, making him look several years younger.

He looked at Jennie then at Lisa who already had an arm slung over her shoulder before saying,

**"I have to say—I saw this coming."**



*stuff*

in tow. Then his vision swung over at Stella and Luke who helped carry drapes of fabric in yellow, red and pink.

**"Something weird is going on in the room upstairs,"**

Greg, yet another cousin of Lisa, said which conveyed what the rest were thinking.

**"All the girls are up there."**

**"It must be quite a project,"**

Brad said, craning his neck over the backrest of the settee he was seated on to see how the kids were progressing up the stairs.

**"Must be,"**

Rick agreed.

**"I heard Lily and Jennie talking earlier about using the room to set up a backdrop."**

**"Backdrop?"**

**"Jennie is a photographer, isn't she?"**

Greg asked as the kids disappeared from their sight.

They nodded then looked at Lisa for confirmation, but she merely sat there seemingly unaware of their curiosity with the children.

**"Hey Lisa . . . Lisa?"**

**"She spaced out again."**

*She stared straight at her with her glacial eyes and asked, "What do I get in return?"*

**"In return for what?"**

*Lisa did not move from her position—arms extended on both sides of the door frame blocking the small girl—by the exit of the dining area that led to her office.*

**"For not murdering your dear Nini,"**

*she derided using her well polished nails for air quotes on dear. "From the looks of it, you are determined to keep me away from your damsel who still doesn't know she's in distress."*

**"Whatever is on her head must be damn engrossing,"**

Brad said amusedly.

**"Come on Irene,"**

*Lisa said in a diplomatic way, hoping to dissuade the girl of whatever she's conjuring inside her pretty ebony head. "Can't you just let this pass? For Nini? As a best friend?"*

*Irene made a show of trying to consider her suggestion then after a minute, gazed into the tall woman's eyes again and declared firmly, "No. But I can be persuaded to play nice . . ."*

**"How much?"**

*She snorted a laugh. "I'm sure money isn't an issue for you, Manoban. And you know I'm not short of it either."*

**"So what will it take then?"**

**"I don't think engrossing is the term,"**

Rick countered observing Lisa's not too pleased expression and the faraway look in her eyes.

*A sly smile appeared on Irene's face that had Lisa feeling a sense of foreboding. But she stayed quiet, letting Irene speak. "Tell me you'll agree then, I'll tell you what I want."*

**"What guarantee do I have that you won't blackmail me if I agree to your demand?"**

**"None."**

**"That's not good enough."**

**"It's all you're getting. You can keep me away now but there are other days,"**

*Irene stated but it sounded like a warning. "You're a busy woman, Manoban. Can't always be the gallant knight for Jennie."*

*Lisa's face tightened in annoyance but after giving it some thought, she yielded anyway. "Fine," she grumbled. "What do you want?"*

**"Yeah."**

Greg agreed waving a hand to get Lisa's attention.

**"She looks . . ."**

*Irene's slim shoulders shook with mirth. It was the kind of laugh you'd expect to hear from someone who won and is having an enjoyable time flaunting that victory at the unfortunate loser—much to Lisa's irritation.*

**"Just say what you want!"**

*She composed herself and said, "There's a mini fashion show four weeks from now. The people who organize it are friends of ours from high school and college. And this is done yearly . . . it's*

**tradition."**

*There was obvious emphasis on the word 'tradition'. "We all participate since it's the highlight of our yearly reunion and it's always a spectacular event plus the fact that it's for charity."*

*The small woman managed to confuse her again. "That's it?" Lisa asked then assumed she wanted a venue for the fashion show which she can provide easily. "You want a venue! I can offer—"*

*She raised a hand to stop her then continued on. "Not a venue. It's the participation."*

**"What?"**

**"She looks pissed,"**

Adam finished, resuming his game again.

**"Do you think it's Jennie?"**

**"I doubt it,"**

Adam negated.

**"She's different with Jennie. You should have seen them when they arrived. It was weird to see her being—I shudder to say this word but there's nothing else appropriate—tender."**

**"I don't blame her. She's hotness personified."**

That sort of remark earned Brad a good smack on the head from Greg and Rick.

**"Hey! I'm only stating a fact here."**

**"Jackass. He's not talking about that kind of tender you have in mind."**

**"Jennie will be modeling in the fashion show . . . she always does."**

*Lisa sighed. If she could just do away with the dramatics and get to the point, time will not be wasted as much. "That's great to know Irene. I will watch any show Nini is in. She'll be gorgeous on stage. But I still don't know what you want."*

**"So that means you consent to Jennie modeling?"**

**"Yes . . . is that it? You're asking permission on Nini's behalf?"**

*Irene nodded with a knowing smile. "Yeah. Just so we're clear . . . you said yes already, didn't you?"*

**"Yeah. Nini can model."**

**"Great!"**

*But something about her smile prompted Lisa to ask, "What kind of fashion show will it be anyway?"*

**"Swim wears."**

*Irene answered in a suddenly chipper mood and her face broke out into a huge grin when Lisa realized what she just agreed to. The Thai woman's scowl was a definite delight for the small woman. "She'll be modeling the skimpiest one—I'm sure you know what skimpy means. You used to live for skimpiness." She whirled around to walk back to the booth but midway through paused to add, "Oh and don't worry, Manoban, you have front row seat . . . along with the rest of the guys in attendance."*

**"What the fuck Irene! No way!"**

*Lisa followed her to the booth. "I won't let Nini parade herself nearly naked!"*

*Irene wagged a finger to her face. "It's too late for that. A one piece suit won't do her body any justice. More skin is in. Besides, Jennie is great at strutting her stuff on the catwalk and she likes doing it. You'll crush her heart if you won't allow her to model."*

**"Don't give me that drama bullshit, Bae!"**

*Seulgi looked up from the dish she was already eating when they sat down. "New quarrel," she mused noting Lisa's irate expression. "Thanks man. I need a break from her."*

*Lisa ignored her best friend to reason with Irene. But the latter interrupted before she could launch into an argument. "She's modeling and that's it. Don't be such a freak of nature. The proceeds of the show will also go to charity. And Jennie is not the only married female who's modeling a skimpy swim wear."*



**"I'd rather you rant on Nini. I won't stop you."**

*Lisa waved an arm in the direction of her office. "And if it's for charity I will donate a sizable amount."*

*Irene smirked. "You know, I never took you for the possessive type but here you are acting like it."*

**"She isn't,"**

*Seulgi reinforced. "Jennie seems to have sparked her sudden possessiveness."*

*Irene afforded Seulgi a brief glance and raised a dubious brow at Lisa but her lips remained with a joyous smirk at the Thai's apparent annoyance for her. "Do you really think I would resort to murderous means on Jennie over such a petty matter?"*

**"Knowing you? Yes!"**

**"For your information, I was only going to congratulate her. That's what best friends do when the other friend is happy. You overreacted,"**

*Irene pointed a finger at her. "So, Manoban, tell me . . . who's dramatic now?"*

**"Lisa looks like she wants to rearrange someone's face. Whoever that person is, has my pity."**

Their little discussion was interrupted again when three of the women who are supposed to be in the room upstairs with the kids walked past them while carrying several clothes, hats and various accessories and were excitedly chattering with each other.

When they were ascending the stairs, Jennie appeared next and she had with her a professional camera and a tripod confirming the men's assumption that a photo shoot will be happening upstairs. But unlike the other girls, she greeted all the guys with a pleasant smile and a quick wave of the hand before her vision swung over at Lisa.

All the guys, except for Adam who was so much into the game he's playing, followed Jennie's line of vision to see Lisa had her mind back to the present and was looking back at her wife with an endearing grin on her lips—no traces of the annoyed expression earlier.

From where she stood, Jennie looked smilingly at Lisa as if to convey how she's enjoying her time with Lisa's family after the initial trepidation for this unexpected visit vanished and she was welcomed with open arms by every member of the Manoban clan.

Jennie couldn't say much at the moment with all her husband's cousins there swinging their amused gazes back and forth between her and Lisa so instead, she slowly mouthed to her,

*Thank you.*

Lisa grinned even more, instantly forgetting about Irene's blackmailing four days ago then she mouthed back her response.

*Thank me later.*

Jennie rolled her eyes but the smile shining on her face never diminished one bit.

*Horny!*

Lisa chuckled softly, her full attention and vision focused solely on the brunette, regardless of the none too discreet snickers from her cousins.

*I am,*

she affirmed without a second thought. Then she winked at her.

*Later.*

Jennie promised with a teasing glint in her eyes which had the Thai grinning impishly. Then she ran toward the stairs to catch up with the other ladies.

The silent exchange was well viewed by her cousins and it didn't



was gorgeous like always and also glowing with enthusiasm, detailing to her what was done, said and played out that made her laugh.

It was a long account of how Jennie spent her day, mentioning the names of her cousins, nieces and nephews like she knew them by heart already. She had enjoyed doing the improvised shoot with the girls and the kids. She joined in the turtle race Gil held in the mucky part of the playground—cheering her very own turtle she named

*Slowly*

and was a little disappointed that he was so slow he lost to Stella's turtle.

She also spent some time with her mother in the garden, getting better acquainted and taking pictures of her precious flowers. After that she went shopping with her other female cousins for several hours only coming back in time for family dinner.

**"You have a wonderful family, Lisa."**

Jennie said as she finished her story, her arms finally dropping to her sides.

Lisa pushed off from the huge couch she was sitting on, stepped close to her and wrapped an arm around her waist.

**"So this is a good surprise trip?"**

Jennie chuckled, leaned up slightly and pressed a kiss to her jaw.

**"When we arrived I wanted to strangle you but after everything that happened today, I'm glad you thought of this,"**

she admitted running her fingers through the Thai's soft chestnut locks as her body molded against hers.

**"I've never experienced being in a family this big."**

**"My family is your family too."**

Lisa kissed her temple then slid down to nip her ear.

**"It does work that way, doesn't it?"**

Jennie looked so surprised and yet so pleased by the thought that Lisa could not stop the laugh from escaping her lips.

**"Yes, it does."**

Jennie giggled at her own reaction, leaning away from Lisa and cupping a hand over her mouth to keep her from laughing further.

**"Don't laugh! You know what I mean."**

Lisa gently gripped her wrist to remove the hand that was covering her mouth.

**"Thankfully I do."**

Then she kissed the pretty pout off her wife's lips.

Jennie easily responded, snaking her arms around the Thai's neck to draw her close while she did the same pulling her by the waist. Lifting her up a little, Lisa stepped backwards to the couch and then without breaking the kiss swiftly pushed her down on the sofa so that she lay under her weight.

When Lisa lifted her mouth for air, Jennie bracketed her jaw and whispered,

**"Thank you for giving me a new family."**

The sincerity and joy in her tone made it seem like she just received the most wonderful gift in the world and in turn, Lisa feels pleased with herself because she's the one who gave her that gift.

**"You're welcome."**

Jennie smiled that wonderful gummy smile of hers and drew Lisa's face closer, pressing their foreheads against each other. She closed her eyes, sighing happily and gently nuzzled the tip of her nose on hers.

**"They're wonderful, Lisa."**

Jennie said, referring to her huge family.

Lisa tightened her embrace on her and quickly claimed her lips for a deep kiss that made her gasp with its intensity.

**"You . . . are . . . wonderful,"**

Lisa declared, punctuating every word with her searing brand of kiss and Jennie welcomed her sensuous mouth and tongue like always, responding to it with a passion that equaled her own.

## [21] Unspoken

**"The tea bush is pruned and harvested, and its height maintained at about three feet. This tea bush is the standard for most of today's tea cultivation due to its richer and fuller leaves."**

Lisa grunted in reaction, making the brunette know she was still listening to her lecture about tea.

It was a Saturday and normally, they should be outside enjoying their time with Lisa's cousins and the rest of the Manoban clan, but no, they were currently inside the library, adjacent to Marco's home office, discussing about tea.

Jennie was tasked to educate Lisa on anything and everything about tea while Lisa herself should listen and get everything in her head that's related to their subject of tea.

Why?

That's the part Lisa hated because she had no say in the matter that her father and grandfather decided on early that morning while they were enjoying breakfast in the gardens.

**"Go to the farm on Monday, Lisa. You have to see firsthand how the processing works. And you need to meet all the people who work for you there,"**

Marco had said, or more like ordered, in the midst of a happy conversation about non-consequential subjects that everyone on the table can give an opinion to.

At first, laughing at Adam's joking remark about a messed-up Nursery Rhyme involving Little Red Riding Hood and a wolf, Lisa thought she heard her father wrong or that whatever he's saying wasn't directed to her. But her grandfather seconded the spur of the

moment decision.

**"Stay for a week or longer than that. You have to make sure when you leave the farm you already know what there is to know about tea like it's the back of your hand."**

She objected of course. She doesn't want to go to the farm and spend more than a week there, waking and sleeping with thoughts of tea leaves—even if she knows her father's decision to send her off is for a very valid reason business wise.

**"Dad,"**

*Lisa groaned and placed her knife on the table, losing her appetite and the jovial mood she was riding on since yesterday. "I can't—" She slightly tipped her head in Jennie's direction who was seated to her left. "Not right now."*

**"I'm sorry, my daughter,"**

*Marco sighed apologetically. He understood his daughter's reluctance to leave Jennie but the decision for her to go to the farm is in the best interest of the business and with the upcoming opening of the new restaurant, it's a must for Lisa to be well educated on the industry of tea. "But you have to. The people there should know you are interested to learn about what they do."*

**"Ask her to come with you,"**

*Patrick suddenly suggested. "Just be sure to learn about tea when you're there and not spend all your time exploring her anatomy."*

*Patrick received a mild reprimand from Alicia for the intrepid remark but Lisa had already ignored them, turning her attention back to Jennie who was having a lively chat with her other relatives while enjoying her breakfast of caramel waffles and fruits. She gently squeezed the brunette's hand that was resting on the table next to her to gain her notice and when she did, she whispered Patrick's suggestion to her ear.*

*But to her disappointment, Jennie couldn't come with her to the farm. She explained with the same regret Lisa was feeling that she has prior*



*commitments for the entire week she cannot back out of. Well, she can but she risks being sued for breach of contract.*

So they ended up in the library. Jennie had been talking tea for nearly an hour while Lisa, every now and then, would ask questions about some points that aren't as clear. But it didn't really mean she was interested at the moment to know about tea.

**"Soil and weather affect how the tea plant is grown, right?"**

Lisa asked half-heartedly, leaning against the backrest of the small sofa they were seated on and flipping through the glossy pages of the book that had pictures of tea leaves, tea farms, tea processing equipments and the like. She was just glad Jennie is with her, next to her with the brunette's legs stretched out over her lap while sharing her knowledge on tea.

**"Altitude is a factor as well,"**

Jennie informed sounding as bored as Lisa was. The brunette doesn't want her gone for a week. She'll miss her.

**"Some teas crave high mountains and cool mist, while others grow better in lower terrain. Most premium quality teas grow at higher elevations, where mountain mist and dew shield the plants from direct sunlight. This humidity helps protect the leaves during the cycle of each day, maintaining a temperature that allows the leaves and buds to develop and mature at a slower pace."**

*God! One week—or more—that's too long.*

Just the thought of the week to come without being able to see Lisa is making Jennie depressed. But what can she do? It's not as if Marco and Patrick want to separate them on purpose. They have a compelling reason behind the decision and having grown up in family where business is an integral part of daily life, she knows sacrifices should sometimes be made for the good of the business.

**"What's the difference between loose leaf and tea bags?"**

Lisa inquired still flipping pages to look at pictures while her free

hand absentmindedly stroked Jennie's lower legs.

The nerd in her makes her answer most of the Thai's questions in an instant. Not once did Jennie pause to think or consider what she will say.

**"Loose-leaf teas are usually made up of whole leaves or broken leaves, while tea bags are usually filled with fannings or dust. During processing, raw tea leaves are graded from best—the bud and the first two leaves of the shoot—to worst which are fannings. Many tea connoisseurs consider brewed whole-leaf tea the best tasting. A whole leaf does have more surface area for water to extract the flavor characteristics of the tea. On the other hand, tea bags made from fannings and dust doesn't have much surface area for this extraction."**

Yet, even though Lisa is amazed by her wife's familiarity of tea, she cannot be bothered to appreciate it at the moment because she keeps thinking of the Monday to come when she would fly off to the farm without her.

**"How about Orange Pekoe? I've been hearing it often when people are talking about tea. What is that exactly?"**

Lisa will miss her. No doubt about it. But there is another feeling that's equally prevalent . . . it's the thought of being apart and not knowing what will happen while they're miles away from each other . . . like what had happened to her and Niki.

Much as Lisa hated to think of Jennie in that way, she can't seem to stop her mind from worrying about what lays ahead. Call it learning from past mistakes or whatever but, married or not, she can no longer afford to be complacent or so assured that what she left with is the same when she comes back.

Jennie shifted slightly, adjusting her hips a little to a more comfy position. Her interest on tea and its processing is slowly developing into hatred.

**"Many people think that it is a special kind of tea but the term Orange Pekoe is only a grading measurement of the tea leaves'**

**size and condition."**

Lisa nodded slowly then closed her eyes, brows creasing while she massaged her forehead as if to remedy the onset of a headache. When she let up on the massage and opened her eyes, she snapped the book shut and carelessly tossed it to the floor next to the sofa.

Swinging her gaze over at Jennie who remained unusually overcast as she rested the back of her head on the armrest of the sofa, Lisa sighed heavily and gently pulled the brunette up so that they were staring face to face and Jennie straddled her lap.

**"I don't want to leave,"**

Lisa quietly admitted, reinforcing the somber look on her doll-like handsome face.

**"But you have to,"**

Jennie replied in the same soft voice, the sadness in her eyes matched his.

Lisa shook her head, while her thumb brushed across Jennie's plump lower lip in a gentle but possessive caress before stroking up the angle of her cheekbone and then she rephrased her words.

**"I don't want to leave you."**

That made Jennie smile. It wasn't a big one but Lisa could tell she was pleased to hear what she said. One hand reached up to cover the Thai's hand that was laid against her cheek and the other rested over her broad shoulder, lightly squeezing it.

**"I will miss you too,"**

Jennie averred softly.

With eyes that suddenly turned dark, Lisa held her chin steady for her kiss.

**"I will miss your gummy smile, your gorgeous face, your laugh, your company . . . I will miss you,"**

she stated in a slow but firm and clear voice, letting Jennie know how seriously she will be missed by the former.

Jennie's heart gave a lurch as she carefully observed Lisa's face.

*Is that the look of a woman in love?*

Her face solemn, her hazel eyes roaming the features of her face as though she was memorizing every line, every nuance she had and there was both awe and pleasure in the brown depths as the Thai looks at her that could only be likened to someone who's in love.

But then, what does Jennie even know of how a woman in love would look? Nothing. There's no previous experience, past love or lover to base it on. Probably what she's seeing on Lisa's face could be just what she says . . . the look of a woman who will be missing her wife.

Yet, Jennie hopes that somehow it's more than just missing her.

*I love you.*

The brunette gasped faintly at the sudden thought in her head and her eyes widened a bit, which Lisa merely took as a natural reaction to their closeness.

*Oh my god! I love her.*

The past months, the events that took place between them, the progression of their relationship—from ignoring each other to being friends then to flirting and eventually to being like a real married couple—and the rollercoaster of emotions she felt during those times up until this moment flashed in her mind and she finally realized and accepted . . . she does . . . she fell.

Jennie has fallen in love with her husband.

*Does she feel the same?*

Instead of going for her juicy lips, Lisa brushed her lips against her wife's temple first then she kissed across her forehead and down to her cheek then skimmed the delicate line of her jaw.

A muffled laugh escaped from Jennie as she angled her head to give Lisa better access to her neck. It was a laugh of both wonder and a giddy unexplained feeling in the pit of her stomach over the startling insight to what her heart has been trying to tell her for so long.

**"What?"**

Lisa asked, pulling back a little, surprised by her reaction.

**"If you want to let me know how much you'll miss me, better improve on your aim, Lisa. My lips are still in the same place as before,"**

Jennie retorted, mildly joking. Her clear brown eyes looking at the Thai with amusement and unknown to her, love.

Lisa's dark hazel eyes registered some confusion before it was quickly replaced by a desiring look the same time as her mouth crashed down on her smiling ones, failing to notice the change in the way Jennie was gazing at her.

**"You're trying to suggest something, Nini."**

Lisa said with a girlish smirk against the brunette's semi parted lips.

**"I can sense it. We can, you know. We're alone in a stuffy library."**

Jennie smiled into the kiss but deep inside she was wishing, hoping for a sign or anything at all to give her a clue as to what the Thai may be feeling for her.

**"Don't we have to abide by your parent's rules? This is their house."**

**"On the contrary, they are quite lax when it comes to me and you."**

Lisa's enjoying their teasing as much as the kissing itself.

**"We can do whatever we want . . . for as long . . . as we**

**please."**

Jennie hands glided up from Lisa's chest to go around her neck.

**"That's what we did last night,"**

she said, unconsciously pressing the lower part of her body against her.

**"That was last night."**

Then, Lisa kissed her hungrily, moving her mouth with urgency and fierceness to make her moan low in her throat and respond by kissing the Thai back with equal passion.

Lisa thrust her tongue inside the warm crevice of Jennie's mouth, retreating then plunging back in repeatedly until she felt delirious with desire at the suggestive rhythm. The Thai woman smiled against the brunette's lips when her thighs that were straddling her instinctively tautened and her hips slowly moved in a grinding motion.

Of its own accord, Lisa's hands glided up Jennie's flat stomach, past her ribs to cup her breasts after easily unclasping the bra covering. Her thumbs circling the hardened bud underneath the cotton dress, coming alive, thrilling and filling her hands with its fullness.

Jennie moaned into the kiss that had become more insistent and deep. Her senses flooded with trembling sensations from both her husband's tongue and the caress of her hands, she was dimly aware that Lisa had shifted their position and she was now lying on the sofa with the Thai hovering over her, never once breaking connection.

After a while, Lisa forced her hand away from her tingling breasts, sliding it down the same way, curving tenderly around the brunette's tiny waist to press it up closer to the contour of her body then running the wide palms of her hands over her smooth back.

Lisa lifted her mouth for much needed air after some time but her fingers did not let up with their caress.

**"Lisa . . . someone might come . . ."**

Jennie breathed the objection even as she made no move to pull or arrange her dress that was hiked up to her waist, exposing the lower length of her.

Lisa's lips silenced whatever the brunette was about to say. Then she growled into the kiss,

**"They're all outside."**

Lisa loves looking at her beautiful face, flushed with desire that she is the cause of. It gives her a sense of pride that she alone could make Jennie tremble, make her respond without reservation and that this one special girl, who carries her name and who now means a great deal to her than when she married her, gave herself to no one but her.

A weak intake of breath reached Lisa's ears and immediately her body tensed. She slowly lifted her mouth from Jennie who looked like she also heard the sound coming from door of the library. Turning their heads in unison over at the source of the disturbance, Jennie promptly blushed like pink roses abloom in spring while Lisa cursed under her breath and murmured something like,

**"Why the fuck does this always happen to us?"**

before she pushed her body off of the brunette and quickly pulled her up into a sitting position beside her.

Alicia stood there, her face looking somewhat contrite despite the pleased little smile that tugged on the corners of her lips. Marco, on the other hand, had a grave face and his arms were crossed over his chest as though he was displeased with what he saw them doing when Lisa was supposed to be learning about tea.

Expecting a chastisement from Marco, Jennie's head flew up to gaze at him when he said,

**"I was gonna tell you to take a break . . . but I can see you're already way ahead of me."**





**"What I'm feeling right now should have been the one I felt during their wedding."**

She waved a hand over at the court.

**"I'm excited, happy and very pleased with myself!"**

Marco chuckled, folding the newspaper and setting it aside. He draped an arm on her shoulders and gazed at the court just as Lisa made a perfect lay up followed by loud cheers. Then running across the court, she pointed at Jennie and winked at her. The message was clear, the basket is for the lovely brunette.

**"It does make you feel not guilty anymore, doesn't it?"**

Nodding in assent, Alicia continued smiling. Over at the court, the opposing team had called a time out and Lisa took the chance to jog over to Jennie, accepting the bottled water the brunette offered to her. Lisa took a swig then leaned forward to whisper something in her ear causing her to laugh.

**"She's marvelous, isn't she?"**

**"She's sweet, unselfconscious and refreshingly candid."**

**"And she makes our daughter happy."**

**"Apart from Patrick's approval, which by the way is quite a feat, the youngsters seem smitten with her and the rest has nothing but good words for her."**

The time out ended but before Lisa went back to the court, she tucked the loose curls from Jennie's bound hair.

**"I never thought I'd say this, but right now, seeing them like that, I'm glad we forced this marriage on her."**

**"Yeah,"**

Alicia agreed, the corners of her eyes crinkling as she smiled when Lisa paused midway to the center of the court and trotted back to Jennie to press a quick kiss on her lips.

**"They looked good during the wedding...but seeing them like that is so much better in my opinion."**

**"It could be passion . . . or more than that."**

Alicia shifted on her side to better see Marco's face and more or less lean something from it that made him ask that question. Not that she doesn't hope for a fairytale sort of ending for Lisa and Jennie, but with the reality of how they got into the marriage, she just wants to keep things as real as they are and that includes dismissing the notion of love this early in their marriage.

**"What makes you say that?"**

She inquired.

**"Is there something you know that I don't?"**

**"Let's just say I overheard their conversation."**

**"You eavesdropped?!"**

Alicia clamored, her face scandalized and she shot her husband a censorious look.

**"I overheard,"**

Marco corrected.

**"There's a difference, honey. They were talking in the halls and I heard them."**

He earned an assessing look from his wife as if determining the truthfulness of his defense and after about a minute she decided he wasn't lying and went on to ask him,

**"What did you hear?"**

Marco chuckled at the curiosity in her tone but stifled it when she frowned warningly at him. He covered the laugh with an intentional cough before saying,

**"It seems that our daughter isn't happy about a certain fashion show Jennie will be participating in wearing only a skimpy swimsuit—her words, by the way, not mine—she admitted to her about feeling jealous knowing that the guys in attendance for the show will be ogling her—again her words—when she walks out the stage."**

**"What did Jennie say?"**

**"She said no one will be interested in ogling her. It's the suit they will be looking at not her."**

**"And?"**

**"Lisa said if he's a guy she would definitely ogle. Being the case, she argued she knows what guys look at and that she's sure they will look at her not the suit."**

**"Then?"**

**"And that's all I heard."**

Alicia became silent as if her mind was analyzing what Marco had overheard, trying to find hidden meanings, if there are any, but then she might have found a positive analysis after a moment when a slow grin crept over her lips and she said,

**"Jealousy is a good sign."**

**"A good sign for what?"**

**"For love."**

Marco looked skeptical but a part of him wanted it to be true too.

**"Even though with Jennie here, she still insists on sleeping in the guest room like every other time she comes home and is making no inclination to tell her where her real room is—for reasons that all but Jennie is aware of—I also want to believe it, honey."**

He wants Lisa to be happy. To move forward after the heart break

with Niki.

**"I really hope so."**

And hopefully Jennie will bring back more of the old Lisa . . . like what he's seeing since they arrived.

•••••

Jennie looked up at the Thai's handsome profile as she sat next to her in the entertainment room where every adult in the house were gathered to watch the movie Vantage Point. The guys obviously won over the girls' choice of cheesy flicks on this one. She didn't really care what movie they play. She was just glad to be spending the hours with Lisa and the entire family. She's so happy that she's almost afraid to trust the feeling.

Of its own accord, her hand moved imperceptibly to seek hers. It was a tiny movement, one Lisa might have missed since she looks fairly concentrated on the film playing on the wide screen. But as Jennie glanced down at her hand, Lisa's hand slid into her seeking ones, covering it and strong fingers laced with hers.

Then while still focused on the movie, her thumb slowly rubbed the center of her palm, brushing left and right and in circular motions that caused an electrifying effect up Jennie's arm, shooting straight to her spine and every nerve ending on her body.

It was probably an idle touch on the Thai woman's part but she couldn't stop her heart from fluttering at the caress or her body from melting in reaction to a simple stroke of a thumb. Lisa's always had this effect on her senses but if before it was for physical reasons, this time it's her heart dictating her body to respond to her touch.

It's a natural reaction of a woman in love with her woman.

While an explosion went off in the movie and Lisa had stopped caressing her sensitive palm, Jennie, out of curiosity, began to do the same to her palm. She lightly wrestled her hand so that the back of it rested on her lap and her hand was daintily on top still laced

with hers. She stroked her thumb just like she did with hers, concentrating more on their hands than the movie itself.

There was no apparent reaction from the tall woman. Lisa still kept her vision focused on the movie, seemingly riveted by the scene playing before her. A little disappointed but unwilling to give up so easily, Jennie untangled her hand from her loose grip and solicitously traced each of the Thai's long fingers from the tip to the vee in between, then following the intricate lines on the latter's palm as if memorizing how they intersect on her palm.

*I love you,*

Jennie silently told her through her fingertips.

*Do you love me too?*

There were several instances between them especially in the way Lisa related to her or in the way the Thai would look at her or hold her and often during their intimate moments, she was almost certain that she does love her too.

Yet, even if actions may speak louder than words, it is open to several interpretations. Jennie wants to hear the words. She needs to hear them.

Lisa could not understand anything that was happening in the movie. She started out focused on the scene as the movie began. She even told herself to concentrate well on the film since she hasn't seen it before and the plot is somewhat twisted that the fun part is guessing how the different point of views correlate.

When Jennie began to trace indistinct figures on her sensitized palm, she lost it. The insistent stroking slowly but surely heightened her senses to arousal so much so that she already feels uncomfortable sitting there along with her family who knows nothing of her inner battle to stay blasé.

But instead of stopping the brunette, Lisa welcomed her gentle stroking by opening her palm wider as if trying to maximize the pleasure she was unwittingly giving her.

Near the end of the movie, she gave up all pretense of being engrossed on the feature film. Never mind that she did not fully understand the story or appreciate it for what's it's worth. She's more concerned with Jennie and the stunning effect of her touch to her senses, making her nerve endings come alive.

Lisa gazed at her bent head and tried to set aside the discomfort between her legs to concentrate on whatever figure the brunette was repeatedly drawing on her open palm. There's a straight line first then two open circles facing each other and the last is somewhat like the bottom half of an oval.

Lisa drew a ragged breath and closed her eyes. Her body tensed but she fought against it so that Jennie and the rest of her family won't notice anything different. Her brain can't seem to picture her drawing nor figure out what it could mean or if it means anything at all. It was as if she could see the tip of her finger slowly tracing along the skin of her palm, brushing against it and sending a pleasurable sensation the longer she keeps on.

A part of that pleasure is knowing that she enjoys touching her even if it's just a simple stroking of the fingertips.

When Lisa opened her eyes and expelled the breath she was holding, she realized the ending credits for the movie was rolling and Jennie had stopped what she's doing to her hand to engage in a conversation with Lily, Rick and Brad.

Feeling somewhat foolish at her body's uncontrolled reaction by a mere touching of hands, Lisa shifted slightly, draped an arm over the brunette's shoulders and pulled her head close for her to whisper,

**"Please say you'll come with me to the farm."**

Jennie sighed and smiled sadly.

*Please say you love me.*

"

**I wish I could, Lisa."**

**A/N:**

**Have a nice day everyone! Stay hydrated always!**

## [22] Home - M!

*Digging a hole and the walls are caving in  
Behind me air's getting thin but  
I'm trying I'm breathing in*

Great.

As if she weren't sad enough or miserable enough, the radio just had to play Joshua Radin's song The Fear You Won't Fall. What is up with that? Love the singer. Awesome voice, brilliant songs but at her current state of loneliness she wished they could just have chosen Ne-Yo's Closer.

Only four days but it feels like a month already. How does anyone go through everyday when they miss someone as bad as she's missing Lisa? When initially she thought the frequency of her husband's phone calls can tide her over until the latter comes back, now it isn't so much the case.

Jennie's giddy when Lisa calls, delighted to hear all her stories about what she's learning in the farm so far and Renees with her excitement over the new discoveries regarding tea, yet most times she's on tenterhooks to hear the Thai say

*Oh you know what, Nini, I love you.*

But all she gets is

*I miss you*

.

She would've been happy with that . . . but she's slowly discovering that when you find yourself deeply in love with someone, you can't help but hope the feeling is mutual.

Leaving Jeju on Sunday with happy farewells from the Manoban



clan and Patrick himself, Jennie's thoughts debated whether or not she should tell Lisa her feelings and if she does, how to best confess the matter. A part of her is worried that the Thai woman doesn't feel the same. It's a scary thought. That, although Lisa seems to want her with her, it's still only because she simply cares and she enjoys the intimacy between them.

Or Lisa's mind is just too occupied with work and the new business that's why she hasn't had the chance to acknowledge or reevaluate what she's really feeling for her.

And here she goes again, giving an excuse for Lisa's lack of reaction . . . she does it time and again with probably all of her relationships whether friends or family.

She should really stop doing it.

*Come find me It hasn't felt like this before It hasn't felt like home before you And I know it's easy to say but it's harder to feel This way.*

During her second night alone in Lisa's room, sprawled on her bed and staring at the ceiling like it was the most fascinating structure ever made on earth, Jennie realized that in the short time she and Lisa had developed the closeness they are currently enjoying, the Thai had become someone she has gotten used to seeing, feeling and basically just being with.

The friendliness between them which was originally intended to be just that while they're in the marriage became romantic in a way—at least for her and maybe for Lisa as well to a certain extent—and quite sexual at that, which was perfectly normal but it was also part of the reason why the brunette fell for the tall woman when she told herself not to. Given the intimacy and the personal closeness they have, she had unwittingly labeled Lisa as someone constant in her life . . . even before they decided to keep the marriage going beyond the agreed upon time.

Since Jennie has no inkling whatsoever except for the mild to moderate or at times irresistible affection he's been showing her since they became friends, she could only wish the Thai has the

same sentiments as her. That her decision to stay in the marriage outside of the agreed upon time has reasons that run deeper than appeasing her guilt or feeling obligated or wanting enjoyable company beyond five years.

That somehow, deep inside, love has something to do with most of her endearing actions towards her. That in the near future, the Thai can also label her feelings for the said brunette as

*love*

.

*God!*

All this thinking is making her feel insecure. Jennie knows she shouldn't be. They're married. But how can she stop herself from being apprehensive? When, at this day and age, marriage has never been a guarantee for happy endings.

And she's fairly certain—childish fantasy it maybe or even cheesy to some people—she wants their marriage to work. So again the question comes back to . . . does Lisa love her? Will she love her? Because if she doesn't or she won't love her, then what will happen when passion and lust is no longer enough to sustain their marriage?

*Damn it! I need a break from missing her.*

*And I miss you more than I should  
Than I thought I could  
Can't get my mind off of you.*

It's hard to miss someone and especially if that someone is the one you love. And more so when the certain someone has no clue whatsoever that her wife is already in love with her and is quite disappointed that when she left, she still doesn't know what's screaming to burst out of her chest.

She should have said something before she left Monday morning but like every other time that she's close to the Thai and the latter's being quite

*attentive*

, her mind set slips and she's easily enmeshed by Lisa's innate charms.

Experiencing sex—a good one at that—and having a sex life that's quite active, she already recognizes that there are things a woman's body needed. And oh boy, does Lisa know how to give them.

She closed her eyes as her mind wandered off from the studio, where she was with Irene, three of Lisa's cousins and Seulgi, who were all there to keep her company and, according to them, cheer her up but instead all ended up loudly arguing over one trivial matter to the other when they got bored goofing off with the studio props and equipment.

Missing Lisa highlighted Jennie's loneliness. But the forlorn feelings also aroused memories of last Monday when the Thai woman unexpectedly joined her in the shower. Tingles of remembrance came fluttering as her mind effortlessly drowned out the noise from her companions.

*Jennie undressed and stepped under the warm spray, enjoying the feel of the water sliding down her skin, soothing her muscles. She tried to relax her mind and not think of Lisa leaving in three hours. But it was difficult not to. Once her hair was fully drenched, she grabbed the shampoo and spread it through her hair, slowly lathering the length as her mind drifted.*

*Work will occupy her time while her husband's away. And she can always go out with Irene like usual . . . shopping and . . . shopping and . . .*

**"You make a very alluring picture."**

*She nearly choked on a mouthful of water when she gasped in surprise at the sound of Lisa's voice. Quickly washing away the shampoo that spilled to her face, she blinked several times and half turned to find the Thai woman standing by the open sliding glass door of the shower area, watching her.*

**"What?"**

**"Can I join you?"**

*Lisa inquired with an admiring little smile evident on her chiseled plump lips.*

*Jennie was suddenly shy around the tall woman, slightly uncomfortable with the fact that she's stark naked and the latter's fully clothed, gazing intensely at her. There wasn't any doubt in Lisa's hazel eyes what she intended to do with her under the shower spray.*

*Before Jennie could say anything, Lisa stripped off her clothes, tossed them aside and took a couple of steps for the shower. She stood directly in front of the brunette, covering her from the force of the spray. Jennie's hand fell to her sides, momentarily forgetting there's still some unwashed shampoo on her hair as she stared up to her.*

**"Please do,"**

*Jnniee whispered, earning her a soft chuckle from the Thai.*

*Lisa's gaze moved down to her seductive lips, then drifted languidly along the smooth valley between her breasts, to the flat stomach and further down the highly sensitive junction of her femininity.*

**"I'll wash your back for you,"**

*Lisa said once her appreciative gaze went back to her face and she reached behind her for the bottle of body wash.*

*Jennie was confused. She expected to be kissed by now, pressed up against the cold tiles, taken quickly and even roughly but as she somberly assessed Lisa's naked form, bare chest down to her bare feet where her toes grazed hers, she sensed as if she was prolonging the hours or at least making sure to have added quality time together, other than the day prior and last night, before they have sex and before she jets off.*

*Staring at the fragrant white liquid on Lisa's palm as she slowly lathered it until it was soapy, Jennie dutifully obeyed her softly spoken, "Turn around." And let the Thai woman work her way from her shoulders down her back to her waist and then her hips.*

*It felt wonderful. Lisa's hands slick from the water and body wash, sliding down her skin, relaxing not only her muscles but her weary mind as well. Jennie let go of her earlier worries and momentarily forgot that in a few hours her husband will be gone and yet she still hasn't said anything to her about what she's feeling.*

**"Fly off to the farm as soon as your schedule clears."**

*Lisa kissed her temple as the formers' hands lingered over the curve of her hips. "I want you with me, Nini."*

*It wasn't a profession of love like Jennie hoped but it's probably the closest she'll get and for that moment alone, it's good enough to hear. "I will."*

**"I will call you as often as I can."**

**"You better."**

*Jennie turned her head sideways to meet the Thai's lips in a gentle kiss.*

*Lisa spoke against her lips. "I'm still here but I already miss you." The quality of her voice over the gentle sound of the shower spray was deep and raspy that it can easily pass as seductive.*

*Leaning back against the Thai's strong chest as Jennie realized the former pulled her up closer to her and felt her erection probing between her thighs. Jennie hummed low in her throat when the line of her shoulder came in contact with the Thai woman's firm jaw, lightly scraping with her smooth skin.*

**"I do too, Lisa."**

**"Let's make the most of the few hours."**

*Jennie reached behind her to grip Lisa's water slick thighs while one of her soapy hands cupped her buttocks and slid easily toward the front to slip between her legs while the other fondled her breast.*

*There were no words needed. Jennie didn't need to be told what to do next.*

*Instinctively, with the spell of lust unbroken and shoving aside the slight trepidation with the position they haven't done before, she stretched out her arms and pressed her hands against the glass enclosure of the shower area to brace herself. Lisa continued to nuzzle her neck, gently nipping the sensitive spot near the base of her throat and her rigid penis pressing against her again, seeking entrance.*

**"Nini . . . here . . . now."**

*Lisa grated, her hold on her tightening. "I want you."*

*Jennie pressed back against her in answer, took a step to open her legs and braced both hands against the glass for Lisa's entry.*

*As the warm water sluiced down their bodies, Lisa eased forward, slipped between the brunette's parted thighs and with her hands gripping her hips firmly, tilted and lifted her until she could enter her from behind.*

*Jennie threw her head back to the Thai's shoulder upon penetration, wanting to reach back and touch her but couldn't as she was pushing herself against the wall to meet her forceful thrusts from behind her. It was frustrating but breathtaking at the same time.*

*She couldn't stop crying out from the pleasure of Lisa's driving force as she filled her, moved in and out of her at such an insanely fast pace, possessing her completely. Nothing intelligible was coming out of her parted lips. Jennie tried saying the Thai's name but what came off was her pant of pleasure that kept getting louder and louder with every plunge the tall woman made.*

*Lisa's own breath came ragged as well, even sounding like a low growl against her ear. Igniting the surge of lust, longing, sadness and hope they felt individually. The steam from the warm shower spray enveloped them but the temperature inside the enclosure began its steady climb the longer they kept on until finally, when Jennie was certain she could not bear anymore of the heat and the sweet ecstasy, Lisa sensed it and pushed forward all the way to the mouth of her womb.*

*Jennie cried out, convulsing uncontrollably around Lisa while the Thai persisted to move faster, drawing her hips even closer. After a while,*

*Jennie felt Lisa stiffen and then she shuddered, bursting inside her with a satisfied groan.*

*Jennie's entire body was trembling as she carefully withdrew from behind. If it weren't for the support of Lisa's strong arms still wrapped tight around her, she would have wilted down the shower floor. Pressed between Lisa's heavily panting body and the cold glass wall with the water still spraying on them, there was little strength left in her as she tried to draw in gulps of air.*

*Her mind, slowly coming to grips with reality, was telling her to say it. To just simply blurt out the three words but pride and her heart demanded that she should mean more to the Thai than what was apparent.*

*So when Lisa regained her breathing and turned Jennie to face her, regardless how sinfully beautiful and seductive the Thai looks with her chestnut hair plastered wet to her head and thin lines of water streaming down the sides of her face, Jennie willed herself not to say any more than what was needed at that moment. In fact, she didn't have much to say anyway since Lisa swiftly took her wet lips in a kiss before hoarsely whispering, "Don't forget about me while I'm gone."*

*Jennie rested her forehead against Lisa's and gently shook her head, "I don't think it's possible to forget you, Lisa."*

**"I can do things with my fingers but my thumb . . . hah!"**

Adam cockily nodded his head at Irene and Chloe who bore identical disgusted faces directed at him.

**"They accomplish a lot!"**

Then he clapped hands with a snickering Seulgi in a high five.

The loud slapping of palms brought Jennie's attention back to the present. She gave the group a quick once over, realizing that she had been naughtily daydreaming about Lisa in the middle of the cluttered studio with her friends and her cousins in law. She blushed guiltily despite the others seemingly unaware that she was mentally somewhere else just a minute ago.

**"I don't want to know whatever miracles your thumb is capable of!"**

Irene shrieked, wagging a tapered finger at Adam as some sort of warning that he shouldn't give too much information on such a nauseating subject.

Chloe quickly agreed after taking a sip of her soda.

**"Yeah! You know, Adam, I've always liked you better when you talk less."**

Then she reached forward from the prop couch she was seating on to grab a bag of chips from the pile of junk food on the table in the middle of their circle.

Adam dismissed the remarks with a casual shrug of indifference and laughed along with the other two guys.

**"My thumb will aspire to be as useful as your thumb."**

Brad announced and raised his own thumb for a mid-air press against Adam's thumb.

**"As will mine,"**

Seulgi seconded, also raising her thumb.

**"I will never again question why the three of you have no love life,"**

Chloe derided who acted, funnily enough, just like Irene.

**"Hey missy! I have a girlfriend!"**

Brad averred.

But before he could draw the next breath, Irene quickly put in.

**"She has my deepest sympathy, Brad."**

**"Make that two. I pity Kendall too,"**



Chloe added, her face looking appropriately saddened.

**"Well, I pity any dude you makes the mistake of having you two for a girlfriend,"**

Seulgi said and the two guys grunted their conformity as they chomped sloppily on their slices of pizza. It earned her a glare from Irene and Chloe's flipflop to fly in her direction.

Irene rolled her eyes and hastily tossed a lock of misplaced hair over her shoulder.

**"That dude, Kang, will be the luckiest man on Earth. Chocolates or oysters won't be needed when he's with me."**

That made Jennie stifle a laugh but she gave Irene a mild reprimand,

**"Don't be naughty, Rene."**

Chloe did not bother to hide her mirth.

A few moments of silence ensued, the guys looking at each other with inquiring faces.

**"What?"**

Brad asked, scratching the side of his head.

**"Chocolates and oysters?"**

**"Aphrodisiac?"**

**"I don't get it."**

Chloe gave off an unladylike snort before fishing a misplaced princess crown made of fake diamonds from the floor then placing it over her head and leaning back on the couch comfortably. She shot Irene a knowing smirk.

**"They didn't take a smart pill today."**

**"Clearly."**

Irene quipped then cast her hazy eyed best friend a glance.

**"Jen, would you like to get your mind off of Lisa for a bit and explain to these less intelligent creatures what I mean?"**

Jennie looked over at Irene who was cocking a brow at her then to the others who seem to have forgotten of her presence when the reason why they were there in the first place was to keep her company. In fact, it was Adam's idea that they fly to Gangnam, since they had breaks from their respective schools, and stay in the mansion for a few days while Lisa is gone to, as he said,

**"keep your mind from wandering too much".**

They weren't doing a good job of it obviously.

**"Chloe, why the hell do you know these things?!"**

Brad reacted, throwing down the pizza crust on its box and gave Chloe an angry gaze.

**"Don't tell me you're having sex already."**

**"I'm not!"**

Adam frowned darkly at his cousin.

**"How do you know then?"**

**"I read it in Cosmo! You know, the magazine?"**

**"Hey. Hey!"**

Irene intervened.

**"Will you two just zip it?! We read it in the magazine, while you three were fawning over the model Jennie was shooting earlier."**

When she was satisfied that the boys plus Seulgi recognized their mistaken assumption, Irene reverted her attention to Jennie.

**"So my dear best friend who I live my love life vicariously**

**through—minus the sex part, of course, coz' if I did, that'd be so not normal and quite a sick thing to do—go ahead with explaining to these guys what I mean."**

Jennie shifted uneasily on the L-shaped divan, aware that Irene knew her mind had drifted again. Giving her friend an irritated glare before she focused her gaze on the three guys, she jumped on to state,

**"Chocolate is also an aphrodisiac, same as oysters."**

**"Oysters look like genitals so that one I believe, but chocolates?"**

Seulgi deduced, or at least tried to.

**"You just had to say genitals, don't you?"**

Irene snorted.

Seulgi bluntly responded,

**"Would you rather hear me say vagina?"**

Making a slicing motion with her arm, in the air between Irene and Seulgi, to cut the dagger gazes being exchanged by the two, Jennie hurriedly explained, "

**Umm, oysters are actually high in zinc which is a mineral known to improve sexual potency in men. It also has a high dose of D-Aspartic acid, a compound effective in releasing sex hormone."**

Adam very slowly nodded and looked at Brad who was gaping at Jennie like she talked to them in an alien language.

**"Uh-huh..."**

he intoned, a forgotten pizza in hand.

**"And chocolates?"**

**"It contains phenylethylamine and serotonin, both feel good chemicals that are similar to those released during sex."**

**"Wow..."**

Brad voiced out after a good three minutes, shaking his head as if to let the complicated words sink in.

**"Science."**

**"Damn, Jen!"**

Seulgi retorted, both amazed and amused.

**"There must be an enormous library inside that pretty head of yours."**

Adam blurted out the only thought that came to mind.

**"You're a nerd."**

A pinkish tint smeared Jennie's cheeks at Adam's label but she already feels quite comfortable with him that she didn't take it the wrong way.

**"Yep, guilty as charged,"**

she admitted breathily.

But Irene did. She instantly shot back at Adam.

**"What are you, pubescent? Contrary to what you believe, intelligence is required in the real world. Jennie is not socially inept like some geeky high school kid, which I think is what you are implying."**

**"No!"**

He objected then swung his gaze at Jennie.

**"I didn't mean it like that,"**

he clarified, raising a hand imploringly.

**"What do you mean then?"**

Chloe challenged, also leaping to Jennie's defense.

He grinned at Jennie.

**"I mean, Lisa always did have a thing for nerds—or smart girls. And a good looking nerd for a wife, I'm thinking, is even better. There has to be a reason why she seems so happy lately—oh there's nothing wrong with nerds, by the way, and I don't have anything against them."**

**"She's happy because she's married to what you call a nerd?"**

**"No, Irene."**

Adam negated.

**"From my own standpoint, it's Jennie as a whole that makes our cousin happy. Her being pretty and smart is just a bonus to an already nice package."**

**"Thanks, Adam."**

Jennie said with a sheepish grin.

**"You're welcome, Jen."**

He quipped then addressed Irene.

**"It must be exhausting to be you, Irene. But with the way you leapt in Jennie's defense, I sure wish I had a friend like you."**

**"Adam, I really like you better when you don't talk much or not talking at all!"**

Chloe groaned, making a show that her ears are hurting from Adam's excessive talking.

**"We get it! Lisa likes smart people. Always have."**

**"Yeah, it's no secret that Nik—"**



*of girls who offer their delectable bodies to her.*

*But by the third week, she eased up on the drinking since it was affecting her academic performance. Niki or no Niki, she still wanted to graduate on schedule. That's why the library became like her second apartment. But even with everything she's occupying her mind with, there are still lingering memories that fill her head every so often. If she could just get rid of it once and for all, then she wouldn't be feeling like she's been to hell and back every day she wakes up.*

*Dammit! Lisa can even smell her perfume over the stink of the old books.*

*She groaned and knocked her forehead against the textbook on the table just as she heard footsteps nearing her space. Without looking up, she raised a halting hand at whoever dared intrude on her privacy and said, "Whatever it is you want to ask, I don't know and yes, I do mind the company. I prefer to be alone."*

*Lisa was surprised when the intruder responded in a very familiar voice. "You don't have to say anything. I just need you to listen."*

*Lisa's head jerked up violently. She was there . . . right in front of her. Impossible! She completely lost it this time. She's seeing things. But even as she tried to tell herself it's all mind trick, she couldn't stop her other senses from acknowledging that she's really there and not some sort of apparition.*

**"You must have the doggedness of a bloodhound to find me here,"**

*Lisa snapped, her body instantly tensing in anger. "Leave!"*

**"Lisa, I owe you an apology and an explanation. Please give me a chance to say it,"**

*Niki implored, debating whether to come any closer or stay where she was seeing the wrath in the Thai's eyes. "Please just . . . listen."*

*With a hard edge to her tone, Lisa read the first paragraph in the book. "The techniques in this section help you to make the best decisions possible with the information you have available. With these tools you will be able to map out the likely consequences of decisions, work out*

*the importance of individual factors, and choose the best course of action to take." Niki's face registered confusion but she didn't say anything to interrupt her. "Do you know what this book is?"*

*She shook her head. Sadly, she realized Lisa will not listen. "No." Guilt was eating her up inside and Lisa may not believe it but ever since she left Jeju, she would always find herself wanting to cry. It wasn't because she regretted being engaged to another man. It was because she had unduly hurt more people than she realized when she went with that decision.*

**"This book is actually quite useful. You know why?"**

**"No, Lisa."**

*Niki replied weakly.*

**"There are very good techniques here that help me select between different options which was very useful when I had a go and no-go decision to make. I was suffering from decision paralysis but thanks to this book, I got moving again."**

**"What decision did you make?"**

*Niki was almost afraid to ask but it was already clear on his face.*

*Lisa laughed shortly and slammed the book shut, causing a noise to sound off toward the more crowded area of the library. "Funny you should ask. You're the fucking reason for my decision." Most of the people there looked over in their direction but after seeing nothing unusual happening, went back to their business. "To be less trusting, less gullible and lastly to not give you the time of day to tell me whatever crap you concocted beforehand that would make me understand why you became a two timing bitch."*

*Niki drew in a huge breath and closed her eyes briefly. Then without warning, she stepped closer to reach for the Thai's clenched hand on the table, enclosing it with her hands and softly said, "Lisa, I deserve that and more. I'm so, so sorry—"*

*Lisa gritted her teeth and fought against the touch of her thumb softly stroking her fist. She felt like she was being burned. It made her feel*



*worse than she already does. It felt so wrong. And to see the same ring on her finger while she stroked her hand, added insult to injury. "Get the hell out of my sight!"*

**"Lisa . . ."**

Lisa's eyes quickly shot open then after several unsteady breaths, cursed silently as she pushed herself upright from the hammock she fell asleep in. Another unwanted dream . . . or more like nightmare. She was missing Jennie before she dozed off. Why the hell would she dream of Niki?!

Niki's touch felt so real in her dream. It was almost as real as Jennie's stroking of her hand when they were at her parent's house. But if she were to compare to Niki's, her wife's touch feels infinitely nicer. She would trade anything right now to feel even just a stroke of Jennie's hand on hers . . . especially if it's like the last time when they were watching the movie.

Leave it to Jennie to erase thoughts of Niki.

Lisa found herself smiling at the memory of how wonderfully the brunette had traced the lines of her palm so much so that it aroused her. She even drew symbols on her hand that she could not decipher because of the growing arousal she wasn't able to control because of her touch.

Lisa misses her . . . so much. She couldn't wait to get home. She's determined to learn all the things she needs to know here in the farm by the end of the week because any longer than that she'll probably go crazy from not being with Jennie.

*What was that she was drawing on her palm?*

Lisa recalled there was a straight line then . . . curved shapes . . . was it letters? No, it was a shape. She stared off into the field where the tea bushes were planted but she wasn't really seeing any greens. She was deep in thought, trying to remember the figures Jennie drew. An oval . . . or half of it. She drew that last.

**"Ms. Manoban, the leaves are ready for your inspection."**

One of the workers suddenly said, cutting through Lisa's concentration. Lisa looked at the worker and nodded, pushing off from the hammock to follow her.

Lisa, not wanting to relinquish the pleasurable thought of trying to solve what Jennie had drawn on her palm many days ago, slightly lifted her hand and using her fingertips from the other hand tried to draw what she remembered of Jennie's stroking.

*Ah, it was the letter U*

. Walking behind the worker, she chuckled at her own stupidity.

*I . . . U—*

She stopped dead on her tracks. Her eyes grew wide, her mouth half open and she looked like she had just been struck by lightning.

In her head, the past few weeks began replaying in quick succession and she realized how utterly dense she was to the emotional changes that happened between her and Jennie.

**"Ma'am? Ms. Manoban, are you okay?"**

The concerned worker asked as soon as he saw his boss had stopped walking and stood frozen on the dusty path.

**"Ma'am?"**

*She loves me? She loves me.*

Suddenly, Lisa swung her astounded eyes at the confused worker.

**"Shit, I deserve to be strangled over and over. I'm an insensitive jerk!"**

She exclaimed, grabbing the other guy's upper arms and shaking him with force.

**"She loves me!"**

For lack of anything to say, the worker responded politely.



chips and grabbed her phone to answer it while Seulgi and the other two guys each took soda from the pack.

**"Hello?"**

She said. It was an unknown number.

**"Hyun!"**

A lively male voice echoed from the other end.

**"Guess who just landed in Gangnam?"**

**"Oh my God!"**

Irene suddenly release a shriek. Everyone looked at her animated form, even Jennie who was in the dark room came out to see what the screech was about.

**"You're here!"**

**"Of course, I promise I'd visit, didn't I? I always make good on my promise."**

With the phone still pressed tight to her ear, Irene swung around in Jennie's direction and exclaimed,

**"Mino's here!"**

**A/N:**

**Anyway, if you have twitter you can follow me @potchinilalisa and I'll follow back too ofc. Let's all be friends! :D You can also let me know if your a reader of this ^^ I'm planning to convert this into Twitter AU kasi :)**

## [23] Interlocking

**"Do I look okay?"**

Irene looked same as always. But Jennie wasn't about to tell her that.

**"More than okay."**

**"Does this color clash with my skin tone? I have another one in a different shade of purple,"**

the small girl sprinted toward her walk-in closet that looked like had been a casualty of a hurricane and started digging into several piles of clothing to find the one she was referring to.

From the bed she was sitting on, Jennie swallowed a giggle to point out,

**"Its purple, Irene. You've been wearing purple since the very first time I laid eyes on you. Purple is you."**

**"Not helping, Jennie."**

Irene shouted from somewhere in the closet.

**"I want to look different. Wear something that says: forget the rest of the world, it's me you want . . . aha! Found it."**

She marched out of the closet to show Jennie a pale purple mini dress accented with sparkly embellishments—lots of it.

**"Rene, we're just having dinner with Mino. You're not performing on stage."**

**"You're saying this is too over the top? That's my goal, you know. Anything that will grab his attention and keep it there."**

**"I'm saying you'll blind him with all that glitter and it looks like you're in imminent danger of toppling over. Do you even know how much all those rhinestones weigh?"**

**"You're exaggerating."**

Irene dismissed the possibility as ridiculous and strode toward the full length mirror to inspect the dress, angling her body slightly to the left or right to see how good it will look from all points of view.

**"He won't be able to take his eyes off me, which is my goal by the way."**

**"Chances are he won't be able to look at you because of the glare from that dress."**

Jennie stated in a reasonable tone. She understood Irene's excitement over seeing Mino.

Hell, she was excited too. They haven't seen him in months because of his work, so opportunities like this are rare to come by. They would have run off the studio yesterday to see him but for some strange reason Mino obdurately insisted they get together the following day which was today.

And since they have no idea of his whereabouts or what hotel he might be staying, they stayed put, waiting for the hours to pass. But in her opinion, Irene's mind has been clouded with anticipation over seeing the love of her life that she's making too much of a fuss over a simple dinner which Jennie is certain will be like every other dinner they had in the past.

Also because of said excitement, her best friend seems to have forgotten that Mino always did favor the simple and even understated beauty.

**"Fuck. I hate to say this but you're right. I'm so fucking stressed out!"**

Irene groaned tossing the dress carelessly aside and stomping like a whiny child toward the couch.

**"I don't know what to wear. That has never been my problem before."**

Jennie smiled lopsidedly.

**"Forget its Mino we're having dinner with."**

**"What's wrong with you?! It's Mino we're having dinner with."**

**"I mean, choose what you want to wear for dinner . . . whatever you feel like wearing that's comfortable and stylish at the same time. Think of tonight like it's just any other dinner date you have. Don't think about Mino while you're deciding what to wear."**

**"I want him to notice me, Jen. See me differently."**

**"The other guys you go out with notice you all the time! But I'm sure you didn't make a fuss over what you'll wear,"**

Jennie averred then smilingly added,

**"You're kinda hard not to notice, Rene. You stand out. You are gorgeous and it's the kind of gorgeousness that only you can carry with elegance."**

**"Mino is not one of those other guys! I love him,"**

Irene pointed out raking her fingers through her still damp hair. She wasn't kidding about being stressed over the upcoming dinner where she will get to see Mino again.

**"I loved him ever since I learned that girl's chests grow into breasts while boys don't undergo that stage. I loved him even more when he climbed that giant tree in my parents' estate to get me down because I was too scared to move a muscle, assuring me all the while that there's no reason for me to be afraid because he was there."**

She sighed as though exhausted from talking then in almost inaudible voice, she said,

**"Tonight is important to me, Jen. I intend to change how he sees me. I'm not his sister, never was, never will be. I want him to be aware of that."**

Jennie sighed as well and stood up from the bed to sit next to Irene. She's very much sentient of her friend's feelings for Mino and in fact, if she had her way, the two would be involved romantically already. In her opinion, they are perfect for each other.

At one point she had even predicted, they will end up getting married. Except, Mino's career choice derailed her hopes of seeing them together.

Jennie draped an arm over her best friend's drooping shoulders and gently squeezed.

**"I don't know how my brother's mind works nowadays but just be yourself, Rene. Mino will be stupid not to see what's right in front of him."**

Irene managed to lift the corners of her lips in a small smile and rested her head on Jennie's shoulders.

**"What if he's really stupid?"**

**"I promise to smack his head on the pavement until he realizes how stupid he is."**

Picturing her best friend, who looked as fragile as a china doll and who at her full height doesn't stand past Mino's shoulders, manhandling her brother who was several heads taller and weighs almost five times her own weight, Irene couldn't help the bubble of laughter from escaping her lips.

**"No wonder you're my best friend,"**

she said, gently nudging Jennie's side.

**"But I think you can smack Mino better with Lisa there to help you."**

A sudden sadness crossed Jennie's face at the mention of Lisa's



name but she managed to cover it up as quickly as it came.

**"Yeah . . ."**

Then she pushed away from Irene to eye her with a bit of curiosity.

**"Wait, when did you start calling Lisa by her first name?"**

Irene pondered on the query, trying to recall.

**"Memory fails me,"**

she shrugged her bony shoulders.

**"But since by my observation, your absent husband seems to show genuine affection for you and you to her, I thought why not."**

**"Thanks . . . I think."**

Waving a careless hand, Irene leaned back on the couch and for a moment let her mind veer off of her clothing dilemma that's best to capture Mino's attention to silently observe Jennie's facial expression. Irene came up with only one conclusion.

**"You only miss the ones you love,"**

she stated offhandedly.

**"What?"**

**"I love Mino so understandably, I miss him. But I'm sure I don't look as morose as you do now. Truth be told, you have been looking quite forlorn ever since Lisa left and I'm not the only one who noticed."**

It was clear that Irene wasn't asking for confirmation. She was stating her observation and whatever she saw was fact not to be disputed.

**"You must love Lisa quite a lot for you to be like this."**

Jennie did not bother to deny, but said instead,

**"Heaps."**

**"Heaps what?"**

**"I love her heaps."**

**"I see."**

Irene softly noted, as if she already knew Jennie's feelings for Lisa would end up like so, and then she added,

**"You know I meant it when I said I'm living my love life through you."**

Irene was given a sideways glance by Jennie who didn't know if she should be flattered or wary of such regard.

But without waiting for her friend to utter a word, Irene proceeded to ask,

**"I have to know, is she aware you love her heaps? And has she told you she loves you heaps back?"**

In answer, Jennie negated the question by slowly shaking her head side to side then averted her gaze from Irene's scrutinizing eyes.

**"No?—as in, you haven't declared your heaping love for her yet?"**

Irene sounded a bit flabbergasted.

**"Lisa still doesn't know."**

**"When do you plan on telling her?"**

Jennie shrugged her shoulders, trying to seem indifferent but she was asking the same question to herself and more importantly, if she even should tell her.

If Irene was worried or disappointed, her face didn't show any of it. But she sat straight and sighed pensively,

**"I'm gonna have to reconsider living my love life through you. I**

**want Mino to know I love him and I definitely want to hear him say it back."**

Despite herself, Jennie chuckled softly.

**"Kinda weird, but we seem to be in a similar situation."**

**"Except you're married to Lisa. I'm not legally bound to Mino."**

**"What will you do if Mino doesn't say it back?"**

**"I'll slap him, tell him what a fool he is and leave with dignity. Then probably drink to forget and when I'm sober I'm sure I'll cry my eyes out,"**

Irene answered after a moments thought. Jennie couldn't tell if she was serious or merely giving an expected reply but she didn't have time to decide either since Irene followed through with,

**"And you? What will you do when Lisa doesn't love you back?"**

**"I . . ."**

Jennie hesitated, not wanting to contemplate such a scene ever occurring. But she knows it's a big possibility. She has no guarantee that the affection and attention Lisa has been giving her can be construed to mean love. What if she doesn't? Can she also say the things Irene mentioned she'd do to Mino?

**"I haven't thought that far ahead,"**

she admitted to her best friend.

**"I will smack her head on the pavement too or better yet I'll smack her and Mino's head together,"**

Irene averred, sounding quite determined to put into action what her mind thought of.

**"If that still doesn't knock some sense into their thick heads, I'll add Kang's head to the mix."**



already airborne since, in her haste to fly back to Gangnam, Lisa had to endure a rather uncomfortable and unpleasant non first class seating next to a very, very insufferable seven year old kid who for some perverse logic found entertainment in experimenting how much air is needed to make a large ball from a bubble gum and pop it so the blob sticks all over her face.

If it weren't for her excitement over seeing Jennie and knowing how their life will make an even better turn because of their feelings for each other, Lisa would have elbowed the kid hard enough to make him loose consciousness so at least she could go back to imagine and anticipate the reunion with her wife without hearing a loud pop every now and then.

Lisa scowled darkly at the conveyor belt, getting more and more annoyed every time other passengers would spot their luggage and pull them out from the moving contraption. Why must this damned thing move so slow? And where the hell is her luggage?

She's beginning to grow roots on the particular spot of the floor she was standing on. Lisa was never good with waiting and at this time the little patience that she stored has already reached its limits.

**"Yo! I'm in a hurry here people! Give me my luggage!"**

If she didn't have a name and a business to protect, Lisa would have shouted the words already. It was becoming very tempting to do so. She should have expected setbacks like this since her departure from the farm was unscheduled. But for the love of all that's nice in this lifetime, it's been way too long!

Lisa expelled a harsh breath and did her best to calm her irritation by thinking of the hour or less ahead when she would finally get home and surprise Jennie. It's one to look forward to. She tried to imagine her reaction and it worked to soothe her impatience.

Her twinkling brown eyes will most likely grow wide upon seeing her and her kissable lips will be agape in surprise before it will slowly spread wide into a delighted smile.

For Lisa's part, she's very certain she'll drink in the sight of the

brunette, admire her beauty from afar before making her presence known and then she'll wrap her arms around her in a tight embrace, feeling her soft curves pressing against her, smelling her unique scent. She'll cup her face with both hands and let her eyes roam her elegant but exotic beauty and ever so slowly run her fingers through her glorious mass of ebony curls.

**"Hey miss."**

A voice interrupted Lisa's vivid imagination of how the next hour will be happening. She looked to her right but quickly swung her gaze to the other side when she felt a light nudge from her left.

Her vision dropped down to a young girl who had a doll clutched protectively in one hand and a lollipop on the other, curiously looking up to her with her big doe eyes.

**"What?"**

**"Are you deaf?"**

*For goodness sake! Another annoying child.*

Lisa groaned inwardly but mustered enough patience to treat the little girl kindly.

**"What makes you say that? I can hear you clearly."**

The girl frowned at her seemingly unconvinced and in a challenging tone, she stated,

**"Why don't you answer your phone then? It's ringing."**

Lisa had the grace to be flustered. Her hand flew up and unconsciously rubbed the back of her neck. She gave the girl a slightly discomfited smile before digging for her phone in her jeans pocket.

**"Thanks..."**

She mumbled to the girl who turned away when her mother called on her to



She was no stranger to this place. She'd been here a few times . . . four to be exact, usually on dates and all four occasions she dined with different women in all four themed rooms of the restaurant which offers four distinct and romantic experiences.

She was greeted with familiarity by the receptionist as she lingered longer than necessary in the patio where a tiled fountain and pond was part of the design along with wrought-iron chandeliers and candelabras that impart a soft light during the night.

**"Ms. Kang, it's always a pleasure to see you."**

The pretty receptionist greeted, smiling her best smile at an already grinning Seulgi.

With her charming and gallant side on the surface, Seulgi took the receptionist hand, cast a quick glance at her name tag to jog her memory of her name and raised her hand to her lips for a gentle kiss.

**"A pleasure it is, Tzuyu."**

Tzuyu giggled but quickly remembered she was on duty and should not be flirting with the guests no matter how charming they may be.

**"Thank you, Ms. Kang."**

She said, carefully withdrawing her hand.

**"Let me check your reservation, ma'am. I'm assuming it's a table for two?"**

**"When is it not?"**

Seulgi asked rhetorically, leaning lazily against the wooden counter as Tzuyu checked her list. She let her eyes roam the patio again, her eyes skimming the wine bar with its eighty-five variety of wines by the glass from around the world.

**"Ms. Kang, your table's this way."**





**"Excuse me,"**

Jennie sprang from her seat not caring if her companions were a little confused by Irene's sudden departure.

She went to the restroom, checked every cubicle but she did not find Irene in any of them. She tried calling her phone three times but either she didn't want to talk to anyone at the moment or she was too much of a wreck to notice her phone has been ringing.

Much as she misses her brother, she couldn't help but feel like strangling him for his surprise to her and Irene. It turned out to be a shocker to both of them and she was too stunned by his news to quickly realize how her best friend must be feeling. Irene had already fled their table, mumbling about going to the ladies room, when Jennie got her wits back in place.

Pressing the redial button again, she walked out into the patio and asked the receptionist if she saw Miss Bae while fervently praying that her friend consider answering her calls.

**"Come on, Rene . . ."**

**"She was quite in a hurry to leave, Mrs. Manoban,"**

The receptionist answered.

Jennie groaned, worriedly running her fingers through her hair as she ended another unanswered call to Irene. She turned away from the receptionist's desk and made a move toward the restaurant doors to try and search for Irene outside.

As she reached to grab the wooden doors, it opened on its own, making her jump back slightly. She mumbled a distracted

*sorry*

at another patron who was about to come in the restaurant but then she was grabbed by the arm and before she could properly react against the strangers' sudden touch, she heard the tender whisper of her name.

**"Nini . . ."**

She looked up from the familiar hand that currently gripped her arm and she gasped, unable to believe her eyes.

Lisa flashed a wide smile and Jennie didn't know if it was the effect of the mellow lights of the restaurant or her own eyes playing tricks on her, but Lisa's eyes had a brilliant gleam in them as she gently pulled her into a tight embrace after admiringly inspecting the red dress that perfectly hugged her upper body then flared out elegantly on her hips and ended mid-thigh.

**"I've been imagining myself hugging you like this since I left the farm,"**

Lisa spoke into her hair, filling her lungs with the brunette's wonderful scent.

The tension in Jennie's body, the worry for Irene momentarily vanished as Jennie felt Lisa's arms close around her and the heat from the solid wall of the Thai's chest through the plaid shirt she was wearing seeped to her body and her eyes closed of their own accord at the feeling.

**"Aren't you going to say anything?"**

Lisa continued to whisper in her hair while still hugging her, uncaring if the arriving patrons and the restaurant's own staff were staring at their reunion by the restaurant's entrance.

**"What took you so long?"**

Lisa pulled back slightly to see her face and the former groaned and chuckled at the same time seeing her beautiful pouting expression. Lisa couldn't stop herself anymore.

So what if they were attracting attention.

Lisa cupped the brunette's gorgeous face and after a softly spoken,

*I missed you so much,*





. ."

**"What?—why? What happened? Adam told me you were just having dinner."**

Lisa was eager to leave the restaurant. She wanted to be alone with Jennie and be able to talk freely, openly about their relationship.

**"Yes, we were—I mean, are having dinner with—"**

**"Jen? Where's Irene?"**

Lisa's head snapped toward the male voice and immediately she knew who the guy is before Jennie even said,

**"Mino . . ."**

**"What's wrong with Rene?"**

Mino asked, while looking from his sister to the woman standing very close to her and possessively holding her waist.

**"Hi."**

Lisa interrupted, extending a hand at the same man she saw coming out of their honeymoon suite months ago.

**"I'm Lisa, Jennie's husband."**

Mino looked at Lisa then her outstretched hand before finally gripping it in a handshake.

**"Mino, Jennie's brother."**

It was a brief introduction as Mino dropped Lisa's hand and asked his sister again.

**"Where's Irene?"**

Jennie would have been ecstatic to see Lisa and Mino finally meeting but current circumstances kept her from rejoicing over the matter. She's more concerned about Irene right now and at the same time she felt a kick of annoyance toward her thoughtless brother.

**"I don't know where she is!"**

She snapped, surprising both Lisa and Mino.

**"If something happens to her, it's your fault."**

**"Huh?"**

Mino responded confused by her sister's sudden outburst.

**"What did I do?"**

Jennie scoffed and rolled her eyes while Lisa stood quietly next to her, observing the brother – sister exchange while running a calming hand along the brunette's back. Just like Mino, she had no idea why suddenly Jennie was irked at her brother over Irene's disappearance.

**"It's not what you didn't do. It's what you did!"**

Mino stood confounded as he uttered,

**"But I only introduced you both to—"**

**"Mino? What's going on?"**

They all swung their gazes over at the source of the voice who, in a white shimmery dress that made her look stunning, was walking gracefully towards them.

Jennie frowned and crossed her arms over her chest, giving Mino an angry look.

Mino realized what Jennie was talking about and in the space of a few seconds, he found an explanation for Irene's very odd behavior earlier.

But unknown to Jennie, Lisa's hand that was stroking up and down her back had dropped abruptly and if Jennie had only looked at her instead of glaring at her brother, she would see Lisa had gone perfectly taut except for the spasmodic ticking of a vein in her temple area and upon careful inspection, her face suddenly

acquired a very hard edge to it.

Not even Mino noticed the drastic change in Lisa's expression but the person who was approaching them did . . . and that person knows why.

Mino called out to his fiancée.

**"Niki . . ."**

**A/N:**

**Jenlisa's back in each others arms plus Seulrene moment for this chapter. I'm sorry for breaking Irene's heart, Mino's not for her anyways. And yeah, Niki appeared again so let the drama begin XD**



## [24] Strange Strangers

It can be perceived as odd . . . for the most part.

Probably the only normal thing was the night air is abuzz with mosquitoes and other multi-legged creatures which are either flying or crawling stealthily in the perimeter radius where they were in the center of.

It could not be labeled as a common occurrence that after nearly an hour Irene was still sitting next to her comfort, namely Kang Seulgi, with her head propped on the latter's shoulder while absentmindedly, after a lengthy silence interrupted only by her occasional sniffing and harsh breaths, she began telling the bear-like woman random details about her life before and after she hit puberty. Something she would never consider sharing to the likes of her, if circumstances were any different.

And there is no evident concern either for possible insect bites which she's usually meticulous to avoid.

Nor was it considered normal also, to anyone who knows Seulgi well, for her to listen and actually be interested in what a girl—any girl—is saying. Seulgi was never one to pay attention about a girl's life story and in her case it was even stranger because she had concluded way back when they first met on that blind date Nayeon set up, that the small woman is the human version of a mountain lion and must therefore never, ever be petted otherwise Seulgi risks being devoured alive.

But with the attentiveness and concern Seulgi was displaying towards her, it would seem like she's enjoying petting a dangerous cat . . . and Seulgi doesn't even like cats!

Another oddity of the night.

Seulgi didn't have to listen or stay. An occasional nod would have

sufficed seeing as the small woman was really not herself and it would seem as if she doesn't even care if she listened or not.

But Seulgi found herself doing so.

She didn't even remember that tonight's plan was to go on a date or that she already stood up said date.

**"We were joined at the hip ever since we met,"**

Irene said, followed by a soft sound that could have been a deep intake of breath or another sob or a chuckle.

**"Perhaps it was pure coincidence that our parents decided to send us to a public school where ordinary kids are from middle or lower class families who lived as neighbors, played together, walked to school together. We were the odd ones. We arrive and leave school in nice cars with uniformed drivers and about a million other differences that most of the kids took with suspicion and maybe envy."**

**"So you found each other,"** Seulgi can't help but to comment.

**"Yeah,"**

the small woman nodded, unconsciously pressing closer to Seulgi when the cool night breeze blew around them.

**"She was the rich but timid girl and I was the rich and daunting one. Our classmates think we got dropped on earth by a flying saucer. They ostracized us but we were perfectly fine with it. I know they're the aliens not us."**

**"I'm guessing you hate public schools,"**

the tall woman assumed, careful not to make any sudden movements so as not to displace the head resting on her shoulder.

**"Didn't you just say—"**

Seulgi threw her a sideways glance but Irene's face was partially covered by several dark locks that fell over her cheek.

**"People became less wary of us in middle school and it got better in high school . . . we have Mino, the most popular and the hottest guy in school, to thank for that."**

*Mino?*

Seulgi's brows lifted in inquiry but thought it better not to voice it out.

**"That's a relief. It would have been difficult being an outcast."**

Irene finally lifted her head to look at Seulgi. She frowned at the bear-like woman but it was the kind of frown that showed doubt or maybe curiosity and not annoyance.

**"Yep. Lisa & I both did. YG High,"**

Seulgi answered. There was an air of pride in the way she mentioned her high school.

**"You two were outcasts, weren't you?"**

**"On the contrary, we belonged to the IT crowd. You and Jennie weren't?"**

Seulgi sounded a little shocked and skeptical at the same time, thinking that Irene was probably not herself yet or maybe she's just pulling her leg. There were streaks of dry tears on her cheeks and her eyes were still red but she seems okay already.

**"I find that hard to believe, Ms. Bae."**

Irene moved her shoulders to an indifferent shrug then rested her head back on Seulgi's shoulders.

**"We had a group of our own friends who are very nice people. Most of them are financially up there and therefore quite popular but outside of that it's always been me and Jen. We were inseparable."**

**"Best friends forever,"**

Seulgi rejoined casually, a faint smile lifting the corners of her lips as an unexpected realization crossed her mind that the two of them are actually having a normal conversation.

**"Yeah. With her talents and my underwear, we were determined to change the world."**

Seulgi's eyes widened—so much for normal conversation—and she very carefully leaned away from Irene to grasp both her upper arms and turn her sideways to face her. In a gentle voice that was laced with concern, she advised her,

**"Don't fight it, Irene. Cry. You are not yet okay—whatever made you run out of the restaurant crying—"**

**"You don't believe me?"**

the small woman sounded like a confused little girl.

**"We could have changed the world, you know. I used to design fabulous lingerie for a relative's boutique. People really buy them,"**

she informed the tall woman with sad eyes as if she was disappointed to know the latter didn't support her dream in the underwear business.

There was a brief silence.

**"What happened to you in the restaurant?"**

Seulgi demanded quietly, ignoring the unrelated topic about undergarments but cautious not to upset more of her current unstable state.

Irene took a deep breath, briefly closed her eyes and in an unsteady voice, she said,

**"S-stop s-shaking me!"**

Seulgi realized what she was doing and stopped outright but her hands stayed holding her.

**"Sorry."**

**"Mino . . ."**

Assuming that what happened in the restaurant must've affected her a great deal.

**"I'm Seulgi!"**

Seulgi corrected, frantically shaking her again to snap her out of the unsound frame of mind.

**"Mino happened."**

Irene slowly moved her head side to side and a lone tear cascaded down her left cheek.

**"He said it was a surprise . . . turned out to be a fucking shocker. I feel so . . . stop shaking me . . . I'm getting dizzy already."**

Seulgi quickly dropped her hands and mumbled an apology.

**"Sorry..."**

Seulgi had heard the name being shrieked by her yesterday but like Lisa's cousins who were curious of the name because of the apparent excitement it evoked on Irene and Jennie, she has no idea who the guy is.

**"Who's Mino?"**

**"Brother . . . Jennie's."**

**"Shit."**

Seulgi mumbled worriedly. From what she can see and based on what Irene is saying, the thing that sent her running from the restaurant in tears messed up her brain big time. If memory serves her right, Jennie is an only child.

**"I'm taking you back to your place,"**

she announced after a while, deciding it was better for the sobbing woman to be in the safety and comfort of her own place.

But Irene continued to speak like there were no pauses in their conversation. She looked straight into Seulgi's eyes and even when the latter stood to pull her up from the bench, she did not break eye contact.

**"I was so ready to tell him, you know. Admit my feelings after so many years of waiting for him to see me not as a friend or a sister . . ."**

Seulgi sat back down, Irene's wet eyes imploring on hers. Once she was settled next to her again, Irene continued,

**"Do you know how it feels to hope that eventually he'll come around and realize you're it? That you can be something more than just really good friends."**

She paused and sighed dolefully.

**"You probably don't understand what the hell I'm talking about."**

Seulgi expelled a breath and leaned her back on the iron bench, staring straight, her face carefully expressionless.

**"I do."**

**"What do you mean?"**

Irene asked after leaning back on the bench as well.

**"I know how it feels to hope for more."**

Despite her inner turmoil over Mino, what Seulgi said piqued her.

**"Who?"**

Seulgi afforded her a sideways glance and a grin that Irene barely saw the sadness it conveyed.

**"And here I thought you were the observant one Bae,"**

she joked, lightly nudging her side.

Irene gave the tall woman a smile. It was a timid one and slightly wobbly, but a smile nonetheless and it's the first sincere smile that graced her lips since leaving her apartment earlier that night.

**"Are you challenging my amazing powers, Kang?"**

**"Depends . . . do you feel challenged?"**

**"I am a wreck right now and my powers aren't exactly working at optimum level but give me a day or two and I'll figure out who this girl is . . ."**

She trailed off thoughtfully then added,

**"Thanks for trying, Seulgi."**

**"Trying?"**

**"To cheer me up."**

**"Damn you're good!"**

Seulgi exclaimed, earning her a soft peal of laughter from Irene which somehow alleviated the gloominess of the night.

**"Yup, I am."**

She quickly enthused despite the crackiness of her voice from crying.

**"Modest too."**

**"You know me so well. I'm deeply flattered."**

Chuckling, but glad that her usual assertive self is slowly surfacing, Seulgi turned gradually serious after a short but comfortable silence and hesitantly asked her,

**"So . . . are you okay?"**

**"Not really."**

The latter nodded.

**"I don't mean to pry or anything and you can choose not to tell me but . . . you mentioned this Mino. Your date? Is he the reason?"**

**"Yes."**

Irene replied a little too vaguely for Seulgi but before she could dismiss her question and change the topic since it looked like she doesn't want to share the details to her, Irene elaborated.

**"Mino is Jennie's adoptive brother. He's a year older and when I met Jennie, I met him too. He went to the same school as the two of us. He was quite protective of his sister so when Jen and I became best friends the protectiveness extended to me as well."**

**"You love him,"**

Seulgi stated plainly and without a doubt in her tone.

**"I do."**

She affirmed, slightly surprised with herself for easily admitting it to Seulgi.

**"What can I say? He's sweet, thoughtful and always looking out for me. When he left for college, I was already in love with him and just as I thought it would pass . . . it didn't."**

**"Did you tell him about your feelings . . . in the restaurant?"**

**"I didn't get around to doing that. He had news of his own. Even Jennie was left speechless."**

Irene's eyes watered once again but she tilted her head back trying to stop the tears, gently dabbing the sides of her eyes with a tissue. When she straightened, having controlled her tears, she spoke with an angry edge to her voice.



**"I knew something was up when he arrived with that—that—that dark haired . . . what's her face! God!"**

Finally piecing together the reasons that caused her to be in such a state, Seulgi's hand flew to her stiff back and began to run her palms up and down in a calming stroke. She wasn't foreign to what she's feeling. She's also been a victim of unrequited love once in her life and the struggles Lisa went through because of Niki's betrayal had been a hard experience for her too.

**"He's fucking stupid, if you ask me."**

Irene stared at her for a few seconds before laughing softly and letting the tears fall freely from her eyes. She buried her face against the cool fabric of Seulgi's printed shirt, laughing and crying at the same time.

**"You're right,"**

she said, her voice muffled by Seulgi's shirt.

**"How could he possible think that a Niki Zefanya is better than Irene Bae."**

Seulgi suddenly tensed. For a second, she doubted her ears. She gently pushed Irene off her chest and looked at her with an unsure expression.

**"What name did you say?"**

**"Mine."**

**"No the other name."**

**"Niki Zefanya,"**

Irene repeated, the ire in her voice for the name still evident.

**"Mino's fiancée."**

**"And this Mino is Jennie's brother?!"**

**"I thought you were listening!"**

**"I can't believe this is . . . fuck!"**

Seulgi slapped her palms over her forehead none too gently and abruptly stood up, pulling Irene with her. She ignored the small woman's protest as she began dragging her out of the park.

**"We have to get Jennie."**

**"Why?! I don't want to go back there. I don't want to see him!"**

**"Close your eyes when we get there."**

•••••

"Niki . . ."

The moment Lisa's vision focused on her, her heart slammed against her rib cage and her brain screamed with incredulity. Her body was taut and suddenly unable to move but she could feel her pulse beating like it had just finished running a marathon.

A small part of her mind, not overcome by shock and disbelief, was trying hard to convince the other part that what she was seeing is unreal. But it proved useless.

The realization that after all these years, just when Lisa least expects it, she's seeing her ex-girlfriend again and it hit her smack on. Any calming tactic and sagacity went flying out the window as soon as she recognized who she was looking at. What's even more shocking to her is knowing that because of her relationship with Jennie and Jennie's relationship with her brother who by some twisted fate turned out to be his ex-girlfriend's fiancé, their lives could be interconnected again!

It was just too much for her to take all at once.

Anger and some other feeling in a similar vein dominated her head. Lisa forgot where she was, who she was with and why she was there, wherever

*there*

maybe. Unconsciously, at the sight of her ex-girlfriend looking almost ethereal in a white sparkly dress, light make up and with her long, now straight brunette hair draping silkily over her shoulders and back as she walked next to the guy who easily found her waist and pull her against him.

Lisa's hands fisted.

She fought the sudden urge to throw a punch at the other guy who was holding on to her waist with familiarity. What right does she have to feel annoyed with Mino? Absolutely nothing! But she doesn't know how to stop, not when she's caught unaware, totally unprepared of this odd turn of events in her life.

Niki registered the same shock Lisa was going through but unlike the Thai woman, she managed to keep her jumbled feelings and thoughts in check. She was aware that her fiancé and his sister, Jennie Kim, knows nothing of her and Lisa's past. For one, she never told Mino about Lisa and although Jennie looked annoyed at the moment for whatever reason, it was directed solely at her brother.

In fact, because of the irritation Jennie directed at Mino with her eyes and Mino, in turn, eyeing her questioningly but with a hint of disbelief, neither of them seems to be sentient that Lisa had become like a tight coil ready to spring.

Niki took the distraction to look at Lisa, pleading with her eyes for the latter not to make a scene. She was uncertain what could be running through the Thai's mind but more than figuring out her thoughts, Niki was hoping time had mellowed her hatred for her.

Deciding she should make the first move, she gave Lisa an anxious half smile and opened her mouth to quietly say,

**"H-hello."**

It was a mistake though.

Lisa's face became even more menacing and her eyes narrowed into

dangerous slits that Niki reflexively took a back step.

The movement brought Mino's attention back at his fiancée. He averted his eyes from Jennie and looked at her, smiling charmingly like nothing was wrong.

**"Irene had to leave,"**

he informed the woman in his arms casually, the arm on her waist sliding up to the small of her back and settling there.

**"But here is my sister's—"**

Jennie interrupted quickly. She gently clutched on to Lisa's arm, still unaware of the raging battle going on inside of the Thai woman or the roaring fire in her dark hazel eyes, and proceeded to introduce her herself.

**"Niki, this is my husband . . ."**

Jennie trailed off when Lisa unexpectedly yanked her arm from her loose hold as she swung around without warning and stormed out of the restaurant. Then, just as Jennie was about to call and run in the direction she went off to, a surprising thing happened.

**"Lisa! No, wait!"**

Niki called out as soon as Lisa moved from her spot next to Jennie then she quickly ran out to follow her, completely forgetting the fact that she was leaving behind two very confused individuals who didn't know what to make of what she just did.

Jennie stared at the wooden door for long minutes as if she was waiting for either Lisa to come back and get her or for Niki to come back and provide an explanation as to why she ran after her husband like they already knew each other very well. She was bewildered, unsure of what had happened and suddenly, out of nowhere, a faint sense of foreboding slowly began to present itself in her gut.

**"They know each other?"**

Mino spoke identically baffled by Lisa's reaction to Niki and vice versa.

With her mouth gaping open, Jennie slowly swung her head towards Mino.

**"Who is she?"**

Her voice came out low and strained with disbelief.

**"How long have you known her?"**

**"Since college,"**

Mino replied with a frown, trying to make sense of why his fiancée ran off to follow an upset Lisa Manoban. He managed to snap out of his confusion and took a step toward the same door Niki exited from.

Jennie automatically followed in his wake, going out the restaurant and immediately scanning the outside for signs of Lisa or Niki. But they were nowhere in sight.

Threading a hand through her dark locks while the uneasy feeling grew even more like two nagging ideas fighting to prevail, she looked at Mino again just as he also eyed her. Neither spoke a word to each other but both their eyes mirrored several questions and assumptions about the two who left them.

**"Jennie!"**

Seulgi's yelling broke her gaze from Mino as the tall woman with bear-like features materialized from somewhere, running towards her with Irene in tow.

Jennie was flooded with relief upon seeing Irene and quickly rushed forward to envelope her friend in a hug.

**"I'm so sorry . . ."**

Hugging back, Irene shushed.

**"It's not your fault. You didn't know . . . we both didn't."**

**"Jen—"**

**"Thank you, Seulgi."**

Jennie said over Irene's shoulder.

Breathing heavily, Seulgi shook her head.

**"Let's get you two home,"**

she anxiously looked around for the familiar face of Niki Zefanya.

**"Excuse me? Who are you?"**

Mino interrupted, shooting a suspicious look at Seulgi.

Seulgi's eyes landed on Mino, belatedly realizing that he was the guy Irene had told her about. Jennie's brother. Irene's love and currently, based on her earlier ramblings, Niki Zefanya' fiancé. But before she could respond to the question, the scorned dark haired woman did it for her.

**"She's none of your business, Mino."**

Irene snapped, untangling herself from the embrace to face him.

Mino saw the redness of her eyes, the slight puffiness of her cheeks. It doesn't take a genius to know she had been crying. Mino knows he's the reason behind the hurt in her eyes.

**"Rene . . . we need to talk,"**

Mino said, his tone tender but firm that Irene could not even voice out an objection.

**"Tomorrow, I promise. I just can't right now . . ."**

Irene watched in silence as he pulled out his cellphone from his pants pocket, pressing a key and putting the phone to his ear.

**"Call her!"**

Mino ordered to his sister as he waited for his call to be answered and Jennie did so hastily.

**"What's going on?"**

**"Who are you calling, Jen?"**

Seulgi inquired, scuffing her feet in apprehension, impatient to whisk her best friend's wife away from where they are. She isn't oblivious to the fact that Jennie has been missing Lisa. Or that she looks positively glowing whenever she's with the Thai woman. Or, whether she admits it or not, with the kind of marriage they had, she's looking like a woman already in love with her husband.

Therefore, it's not a good idea for her to encounter Niki, not when Lisa hasn't told her about that particular past related to her brother's fiancée.

**"Lisa."**

Jennie answered distractedly as she pressed a speed dial button.

**"Wha—Lisa? Why Lisa?!"**

**"She ran off."**

**"What do you mean by that?"**

Irene asked, her eyes shooting glances from her friend to Mino who didn't look too happy with the call he was making that wasn't being answered.

Jennie mumbled something out of frustration when her call to Lisa's phone went to voice mail. She gripped the phone tight, ending the call without leaving any message.

**"Lisa is here?"**

Seulgi hesitantly asked, opposing thoughts forming in her head. Not wanting to assume that what the brunette meant by

*she ran off*

is Lisa was with her, because it's impossible that Lisa can be in two places at once.

**"Was. She was here."**

Jennie replied with emphasis, her tone showing signs of wariness, perplexity and annoyance.

**"She left the farm early and . . . Adam must've told her where I was. She came here to—I don't know—get me or something. I don't know why she had to cut short her stay in the farm."**

**"Wait. I'm confused,"**

Irene butted in, temporarily setting aside her personal issues to clarify the events that took place after she left the restaurant.

**"If she came here for you, why did she run off?"**

Seulgi cursed inwardly as realization dawned on her. She already knows why.

**"I don't know! She was fine one minute,"**

Jennie swung her hands in agitation left to right as if trying to make them see what happened just minutes ago.

**". . . smiling, saying she missed me then—she just . . . bolted!"**

**"What's up with this night? Everything is odd."**

**"Niki ran after her,"**

Mino added, giving up on calling his fiancée but his face cannot be described as calm or pleased.

Irene's upper lip curled in puzzlement along with her well arched brows.

**"Why?"**

She demanded but seeing that neither Mino nor Jennie knew the answer, she stated the most obvious assumption, looking perfectly



scandalized like it was some juicy gossip she had just recently learned

**. "They know each other!"**

Then, as if recalling something, she whirled around abruptly to eye Seulgi.

**"You know her too, don't you? I mentioned her name and you were up on your feet like fire was chasing you and dragged me along to get Jennie."**

**"Damn you Manoban!"**

Seulgi muttered while her mind worked into thinking where Lisa could have scurried off to. It wasn't her place to say and there was no way in hell she was gonna say anything about Lisa's past with Niki. Lisa will have to do it herself.

Stepping closer, Irene asked,

**"Who the hell is she?"**

Seulgi distanced herself from Irene, seeing the usual alertness back in her eyes. Irene had suspicion written all over her face and she was not the only one. Jennie and her brother had the same look. It was all directed at her.

Then came Jennie's timorous voice.

**"Seulgi . . . is she . . . important to Lisa?"**

Cornered. That's how Seulgi feels.

She should just have gone on that date.

*Damn it all to hell!*

**A/N:**

## [25] Realize

There are moments in life you don't get the luxury of having to ponder about certain things or to act in a certain manner that can be considered rational.

When the unusual circumstance presents itself, you are no longer able to think properly and consider the ramifications of your actions partly due to an overwhelming unexpectedness that such a scene is happening to you or that all your planning on how you will act if certain events do take place, even taking into account the worst case scenario, comes up way short.

In turn, you end up hating yourself for letting the douche bag in you come out but at the same time you wish for time to rewind back so you can redo things differently.

And that's exactly what Lisa finds herself doing.

The Thai realized her mistake as soon as she stopped running or rather walking briskly away from the restaurant. Silently grumbling profanities at her own person, she immediately considered going back to Jennie, to take her back home, which was her purpose in the first place apart from the other very important catalyst that sent her flying back to Gangnam, and to add to that, profusely apologize and explain the reasons behind her stupid actions.

She had started walking back to the restaurant but she ran into Niki as she turned a corner, nearly knocking the woman down on the pavement.

The apology she was ready to utter for the unfortunate stranger died in Lisa's throat as soon as she recognized who she is and just as quickly replaced by anger of a different nature that she had no trouble concealing.

**"You followed me?—Why the hell did you follow me?!"**

Lisa demanded of her, aware what implications of the said woman following her would entail to the people they left in the restaurant. Mino is not her concern but Jennie is another matter and what the brunette will think with all of these will determine how well or not so well the next hours will be.

Niki awkwardly regained her balance, grabbing onto Lisa's arm and not letting go.

**"You're acting like a child, Lisa! It's been years. I said I was sorry and I still am but you still refuse to hear me out!"**

Lisa wrenched her arm from Niki's hold. Her annoyance no longer centered over the latter's reappearance but that she managed to compound her mistake by coming after her.

**"Is that it? You followed me to voice your explanation? You didn't even think that this little stunt of yours just made my leaving the restaurant worse than it already is?!"**

Lisa angrily said, almost shouting but still trying to restrain herself from blowing up on the woman who was once the center of her attention.

Niki had the grace to look worried upon realization of what she had done, as if she had just remembered her fiancé was present too. The earlier determination in her face little by little changed to anxiousness and she looked like she was ready to cry because of her unwise choice to run after the Thai woman, which to a certain extent, in a resentful kind of way, pleased Lisa.

**"He's the same guy, isn't he? The one you accepted the proposal, while you were still in a relationship with me,"**

Lisa concluded through gritted teeth, doing her best to calm down.

Come to think of it, half of her anger is self-directed. If she didn't act like an immature jerk running from the restaurant—well, it would have been alright to run off provided she pulled Jennie along with her and not left the brunette there—none of this would have happened.

**"Yes,"**

Niki whispered, a hand pressed to her chest as she drew in some air.

**"We went to the same school, had the same course and shared most the same class."**

Lisa snorted, her arm flying heavenward.

**"Well, there you go then! That explains everything and it sure as hell justifies the cheating."**

Sarcasm is a wonderful tool in instances like this. But a part of her was curious as to why up until now, she's still only just engaged to Mino. Shouldn't the guy have married her by now? It's been years. If Jennie's brother was so eager to propose to her then and she was equally willing to accept the proposal, why obviate the marriage?

**"Lisa, I don't mean it like that!"**

Niki insisted a little desperately. Then after taking another huge gulp of air, she straightened, dropped her hands to her sides and looked at her squarely.

**"I'm trying to tell you who he is. I was the one who made the mistake. I did the cheating . . . I don't deny that! And I also understand your hate for me but I did not plan for any of this!"**

"Bullshit!" Lisa growled with derision.

**"Am I supposed to believe Mino never mentioned his sister to his fiancée?! He was in Italy during my wedding. He knows my name! Try again, Miss Zefanya. I'm not as gullible as I once was."**

Niki silently groaned in frustration. She found it very difficult to tell Mino about Lisa. Her reasons maybe self serving but at that time she was so scared to lose Mino . . . but hurting Lisa was never her intention. The Thai just found out the wrong way. She didn't know Mino was going to propose and the day she arrived in Jeju she had forgotten to remove the ring.

Niki's life hasn't been exactly pretty after the breakup. She was persistently being nagged by guilt feelings not just for Lisa but for Mino as well which eventually resulted in a strain in their relationship.

A few months after graduating from college, she and Mino mutually agreed to separate for an indefinite period when they both landed a job on different organizations, in different countries. She didn't like it but she took it as an opportunity to find herself, reevaluate her feelings that had gone awry after the episode with Lisa which was entirely her fault. It would have ended there but last year while on charity work in Africa where Mino was also doing work for UNICEF, they rekindled old feelings and got back together like there was no break in their relationship.

But just when everything is going well, just when she thought telling him about Lisa is no longer relevant, she's suddenly faced with this.

Like Lisa, Mino and Jennie, she had been dealt with the same hand of fate. But there's little she can do about it and Lisa will never believe she had no knowledge of this situation. Damaged has been done to both Mino and Jennie. But hopefully reparable and everything will end well.

*"Well"*

being they all go on with their lives in peace.

For that to even have the slightest chance of happening, with all that has taken place, no time is better than now to tell Lisa her side of the story.

**"Mino doesn't know about you, Lisa."**

Niki began, the simple sentence designed to absolve Mino of fault and Lisa did not miss her meaning.

**"I didn't tell him I was already in a relationship with you when I started going out with him . . . it was wrong, I know, but at that time I couldn't find the nerve to tell him. Apart from**

spending free time with him, we were always assigned in the same group for class projects and for outreach programs . . . I guess I was waiting for him to ask about you . . . but he never did."

"Oh, so he was always by your side and I was not,"

Lisa retorted in a mocking tone.

"What the hell happened to you, Niki? I didn't take you for someone so needy that you'd want your lover chained to your side at all times—"

She paused shortly as a notion struck her.

"But then again, I never really knew you, didn't I?"

"The distance took a toll on me, Lisa . . . to the point that I got so confused of my feelings."

"I was not oblivious to the distance. I fucking hated it but I sucked it up for the future I foolishly thought we had!"

Lisa laughed sardonically as if remembering a particular event in their past that she now made a mockery of.

"You should have spared us both the emotional inconvenience. You should have told me how you felt."

As though she purposely ignored the cynicism in the Thai's remark, Niki prodded on.

"The distance got to me, Lisa,"

she repeated softly, eyes imploring.

"There were times when I just wanted to drop everything and go back home."

Lisa frowned. It feels like she was talking to an alien. The Niki she knew was confident, poised, always cool and had a strong personality that matched her own.

**"What?"**

**"I suffered a mild depression before sophomore year,"**

Niki stated simply but it took Lisa by surprise because as far as the latter can recollect, the woman in front of her gave no hint whatsoever that she was depressed and she never told her anything either.

**"I had regular appointments to a shrink. The expectations of other people were just too high but with my perfectionist tendencies, I forced myself to please everyone. I felt the pressure from my parents, from my professors, from almost everyone, even from you."**

**"I never pressured you—"**

**"You did, Lisa. Maybe not consciously but when you would constantly talk about what you have planned for us for the future like it was as just a 1-2-3 step, it added to my daily pressures. You were always so excited, lively . . . I didn't want to dampen your spirit and end up arguing with you so I always agree."**

**"I was looking ahead because I wanted our fucking time apart to pass by quickly."**

**"I was in a state where I had to think of the present."**

Lisa shook her head in disbelief. In any other circumstance, her heart would have reached out to the woman who broke her heart after all, minus the deceit and heartache, she liked to think they had a good relationship in the past. Lisa did feel a bit of guilt and pity for her ex's plight but knowing that she didn't trust her enough to confide her problems to her, assuming at once she wouldn't care, that she will be a useless support system because she was miles away, added to her annoyance for her.

**"I don't know which is more shocking anymore, knowing that you didn't trust me then yet claimed to have loved me or seeing you right now as the fiancée of my wife's brother."**





among other things. She doesn't need another person to worry about. Besides, she's aware that Irene's not feeling great at the moment. It would be better for the small woman and for her if she stayed with Jennie and her brother.

Seulgi was about to suggest she and Mino have that

*talk*

while they wait for Lisa and Niki to return but Irene resolutely stated,

**"I'm coming with you, Seulgi."**

Then, she took a step to stand next to her.

**"Rene, let her go. I'm taking you and Jen back to your apartment,"**

Mino suddenly cut in, grabbing onto Irene's arm to pull her back

**. "If those two want to be found, they will be found,"**

he added with a hard edge to his tone.

**"You let me go!"**

Irene shouted at him, circling her free arm on Seulgi's, while yanking her other arm from Mino's grasp with such force that Seulgi was fairly sure she either dislocated a joint or tore a ligament.

**"If you don't care where your girlfriend ran off to and why, not me, I want to know. I'm dying in curiosity!"**

She was jeering him.

**"I want to ask her why she would leave her fiancé and follow another woman's husband."**

**"We're all upset here, alright! She's the only one who knows!"**

Mino snapped back, pointing a finger at Seulgi who narrowed her eyes at him.

**"But I am trying to keep my temper in check. I don't want to do something I will regret later. So until we know what exactly is going on with those two, we're not doing anything."**

Irene muttered something under her breath before saying,

**"Well, I am doing something. I want to get to know the woman who holds your heart. I want to know what she has that I don't. I'm curious to know what made you love her—"**

She turned her back to him expelling a strangled breath then she pulled Seulgi along, but after taking two steps she stopped and abruptly spun around looking directly into his eyes to ask for confirmation,

**"It is love, isn't it?"**

**"This is not the time to dwell on your annoyance for me because I suddenly introduced you to my girlfriend,"**

Mino said, his voice evident that his patience was wearing thin.

**"But since you insist on knowing, then yes, it is love. I love her, why do you think I proposed?"**

Irene didn't expect to hear that sort of reply. It was a stab to the heart but Irene managed to keep the hurt from showing. Unconsciously, her hold on Seulgi's arm tightened as if drawing some strength in them.

**"Right . . . it's love all around...oh the joy...and we can all see she loves you so much too . . . why else didn't she tell you about Lisa?"**

**"Irene, you two should settle this before anything else,"**

Seulgi interrupted, carefully untangling her arm from the small woman's grasp.

**"I'm gonna go and find Lisa."**

**"We're finding them. There's nothing to settle. Not anymore,"**

Irene stated with conviction, but her eyes remained fixated on Mino.

**"I'm not staying here with him."**

**"Let's find them,"**

Jennie's timid voice caused the three to look at her.

**"No, we're leaving,"**

Mino countered firmly.

**"They left us here . . . just like that, Jen. They should come to us and explain. They owe us a great deal of explaining."**

**"Yes, they do but I'd rather hear it now than wait. I can't keep asking questions that I don't have answers to."**

**"Then you're making it so easy on your fucking husband. Don't let her treat you like everything is just okay. Uncle did that after your mother died. Look where it ended. At this point, nothing is okay and don't forget, foremost, you don't have a stable foundation in your relationship with her."**

**"And you have a stable one with Niki?!"**

Jennie scoffed, suddenly angered by the mention of her parents and the possibility that he could be right about the uncertainty of her relationship with Lisa regardless of their mutual consent to extend the marriage more than five years.

**"You don't even know she has a past with my husband!"**

Instead of joining another argument, Seulgi slowly slipped away hoping not to be noticed. But Irene did. She glared at her as she groaned inwardly and the small woman quickly pulled her away from the siblings.

**"Why do you insist on coming?"**

Seulgi asked a distance off.



shouldn't have to be in this situation. If not rewarded, she should be appeased at least.

*Doesn't anyone get their facts straight anymore?*

**"I know it was wrong but I couldn't make myself tell him. I was afraid to lose him. He was a big help to me during my episode of depression."**

Lisa could see her mouth opening and closing but she isn't really keen on listening. She had often wondered about her reasons, questioned her choice but now that she's relaying everything Lisa wanted to know, she found she had lost interest.

Niki's justification—it seems like it to her—are lame.

Will her explanation change anything? It won't rekindle Lisa's love for her and it certainly won't diminish her love for Jennie. If anything, it even strengthened her feelings for her wife. Lisa's been a lucky bastard from the time she married the brunette and she finally knows this now. A little late but she's willing to make up for it.

Fate doesn't hate her like she thought. Fate rewarded her with Jennie! She saved her in more ways than she can count.

There's really no point in all this now that she thinks about it more rationally.

**"I know I still loved you but I was no longer . . . in love with you."**

Niki paused to warily look at her, thinking she'll burst out a reaction but when it seems like the Thai had no desire to utter anything, she went on.

**"I kept thinking of a . . . uhh, better way to tell you but every time we're together you are too preoccupied with planning the future that you failed to see there was already something different about me."**

Had things been different, she would be in an uproar right now over what Niki said but Lisa found she is surprisingly unaffected by her words and opted instead to study Niki with detached interest while she did her best to sell her lame excuses to her.

**"He became so much a part of my life and we clicked almost instantly . . . I fell in love with him."**

Niki looks elegant in her white dress and she still has the same artless sophistication and beauty that had been part of her allure for Lisa years ago. But it all stops there. At the moment, what Lisa sees is just another pretty face, just another female in a nice dress. She already knows what kind of a person her ex really is underneath the appealing exterior and for that reason, her appeal is now lost on her.

So why on earth did she let herself still be affected by her? She cheated on her, hurt her and by her own admission, fell out of love for her but selfishly held on until she had secured another man.

Love had nothing to do with it, that's for sure. Her love for the woman in front of her died way back—so by her speculation, it may be due to the fact that there were several questions behind their breakup left unanswered—which, admittedly, was a mistake on her part. She should have allowed her efforts to explain years ago because possibly it would have given her closure.

Since Lisa didn't, it became a long road of bitter feelings but seeing her and hearing her dismal explanation to make her understand or probably justify her actions, she realized it doesn't matter what her reasons were. She had wasted enough time and energy for something that's not even worth her attention anymore. And even if Niki ends up marrying Mino, which will be weird at first, in the long run, Lisa's sure that it won't affect her one bit.

She will not burden herself any longer of the negative emotions this woman evokes on her. Lisa had already dwelled too much on the hurt she felt.

As Lisa looked at Niki who was still talking, Lisa couldn't help the smirk from appearing on her lips as she felt a wonderful kind of

relief because, though it took her awhile to realize, she can honestly say now, she's free of this woman.

*Finally!*

And all along it's because of Jennie.

Her Nini, her wife who has a heart stopping beauty coupled with a wonderful personality that charms even the most cynical soul and the right touch of sweetness and goodness that cured her distorted perception of love.

**"Do you know why I hate you?"**

Lisa asked rhetorically but with a silly little grin on her face, interrupting Niki's diatribe.

**"Other than you cheating on me in the most spectacular way that you did, what I hated more was the fact that you continued to make me believe we had a future ahead of us. Turns out, I was holding on to a mirage. So yeah, you're right! I will never understand why you cheated or why you never told me your feelings have changed."**

Lisa did not sound pissed at all. She was quite in control of herself and her eyes seemed to have opened up to something she had previously been blinded to.

**"But the thing is, it doesn't matter anymore. What you did manage to do tonight was convince me of how selfish you really are, Niki."**

She stated with absolute sureness then with another chuckle she added,

**"And you know what . . . I cannot believe this is all I'm hearing from you. I expected something more convincing."**

**"Lisa—"**

**"Seulgi is right. It was stupid of me to keep comparing Jennie to you 'cause there's nothing to compare with in the first place."**

**You don't even come close to her! When we were together, you had my love, my trust and my hopes but that wasn't enough for you. You still chose to deceive me."**

Lisa slowly averred which came off like she was lecturing such a self-centered person.

**"Pardon me for not appreciating your reasons, Niki. You see, Jennie . . . she didn't have any of that. I treated her unkindly. I was at my worst behavior but even so, she accepted me wholly, chose to love me—arrogance, nasty attitude and all. You had it easy for you, Jennie didn't yet she loves me. She loves me. And I know that now."**

**"I'm sorry."**

Lisa raised a hand to stop her from speaking any further, the resentment, the previously nurtured hurt and the shock of seeing her, all shoved aside

**. "Don't bother. I don't care if you love Mino or not. I don't care what your plans are. I don't care what you intend do after. I'm done with this baggage."**

Strangely, she smiled and her entire face was suddenly enlivened with what can only be called as liberation.

**"Took me years to realize but you did me a huge favor. I wouldn't have a life with Jennie if you didn't dump me. So—thank you, Niki!"**

In a voluntary gesture, Lisa reached a hand forward and patted her shoulder like guys do to other guys when they're wishing them luck. It can be called a chummy gesture—if she were a guy.

Before walking past her, Lisa said,

**"Now, excuse me, I'm going back to my wife."**

On a run back to the restaurant, Lisa's mind was on overdrive. She felt happy and worried all at once so much so that she couldn't wait to have her time alone with Jennie. The desire to tell the brunette





but rather on what will happen after tonight. Will that past remain a past or will it have a new future?

She's torn between wanting to know and not knowing, however stupid that position may be. She's dying in curiosity but if the outcome will have her heartbroken, then maybe she's better off in the dark. She's had enough heartaches to last her a lifetime.

The sad part is . . . Mino and herself are on the waiting end of the stick and they can't do anything about it.

**"Why do you look like you've been in a similar situation before . . . this?"**

She asked as it occurred to her that Mino seems less confused than she is. He's taking the situation better than she expected from a man who had just seen her fiancé run after another woman.

**"Because I remembered something . . . the first time I proposed to her. She had acted weird after coming back from Jeju. We broke it off a few months after that,"**

he said with a disbelieving shake of the head as he slowly pieced the puzzles together.

**"Lisa is from Jeju too, isn't she?"**

Stunned, Jennie's eyes grew wide before melancholy cast over them and she dropped her gaze low to stare on the ground she was standing on.

*Good things versus the bad.*

She thought despondently. She had been wallowing in the good things for quite some time now . . . knowing her luck in personal relationships, the bad thing, of course, just came crashing down on her. It was unexpected but, if she weren't part of this debacle, she would have applauded the ingenuity of it.

But no, she was in it and she was hurting already.

**"Yes,"**

she hoarsely replied, surprised that she could even speak. Mino sighed.

**"Jen . . . let's go."**

Mino said which interrupted her thoughts. She lifted her head to see him holding out a hand for her to take.

Looking further up from his outstretched hand to his face, Jennie saw frustration, regret and some form of anger in his eyes but there was also an offering of both strength and comfort—brotherly comfort—which at this time, she realized she desperately needed.

With the slightest hint of a smile, she took a couple of steps closer to Mino and gently leaned against him. She felt his arms close around her in a hug and the soft whisper of,

**"It's gonna be alright."**

In that moment, Jennie was a young girl again with her big brother making certain she won't get hurt.

## [26] Tussle

**"She cheated on you then dumped you. Oh boohoo!"**

Irene derided as she paced from left to right in front of Lisa who was currently seated on a deep purple feathery thing that was referred to as a couch in her apartment.

The small woman had worked up quite an annoyance for Lisa after she and Seulgi found her en route from the parking space where she and Niki had their talk. Lisa had ignored her outburst for the most part as they walked back to the vicinity of the restaurant only to find Jennie and Mino gone. The valet telling them that Mrs. Manoban had left with a male companion who drove her car. And much as they tried calling the siblings, their respective phones were off.

In Irene's fashion, she demanded from Lisa an explanation for the *ridiculous, totally uncalled for and possibly the most stupid thing to do in front of your wife and her brother*

—her exact words just four hours ago, Lisa recalled vividly—and even went as far as threatening to castrate her if she doesn't tell her everything.

So Lisa did. Rather, Seulgi did in detail, with the Thai's permission of course, since she found it an utter waste of time to recount the past events in her life that prompted the stupid behavior she displayed, when she should focus her wits and efforts into finding Jennie and try not to linger too much on the scary thought that she might have just decided to leave her.

While her best friend narrated her not-so-exciting tale to Irene, she called the mansion using Seulgi's phone hoping to press her luck and receive word that Jennie is actually at their house waiting for

her. It was quite a stretch and as expected, it is because aside from the butler telling her that the brunette isn't there, her cousins, especially Chloe, expressed their not so kind opinion of her for being an inconsiderate jerk and hurting Jennie in the process.

Then, after Irene had learned about her past with Niki, she calmly stared at her for long, long minutes to the point where Lisa was feeling quite uneasy under the small woman's scrutiny. Irene didn't say a word to her (which Lisa would later realize that her silence meant she was not only saving her energy but analyzing the Thai as well), instead, with an irritated look, she scrolled on her phone and began to call people who were friends and co-workers of Jennie, chatting up each of them like she would on any ordinary day before she would casually ask of her best friend's whereabouts.

With such concentration, Irene went on with the task, not once dampened by the negative answers she gets from every person she called. She diligently did it while Lisa, angry with herself for unintentionally leaving her phone in the mansion in her haste to see Jennie earlier, and Seulgi, quite amazed by the systematic way the small woman was handling everything like she has a vast experience finding missing persons, watched like incompetent idiots.

Disappointedly, the calls Irene made did not get any positive result. But undeterred, her eyes took on an interesting glint when she deduced Jennie would most likely be in the studio or if not, upon her recollection, probably in her apartment since Mino had apparently wanted to take them back there earlier.

Since Lisa was more than willing to pursue anything just to find Jennie and any smart idea as to where her wife could be at that moment seems to elude her usually sharp mind, she took Irene with her while Seulgi drove in her own car—a wiser decision in her opinion—driving like a lunatic to get to the studio and, when they didn't find Jennie there, speeding to her apartment in the soonest possible time not just to see her wife at once but to stop Irene's incessant nagging that began as soon as she clipped the lock on her seatbelt.

Lisa was wrong though because Irene did not cease to lecture her on

her rash, completely thoughtless behavior earlier in the night—the small woman never passed any chance to remind her how utterly stupid she is. Irene was so worked up on her sarcastic speech for the Thai woman that even when Seulgi showed up in her abode a few minutes later and went straight to her kitchen—obviously to find food, she barely paid her any mind.

Lisa would have reasoned back, defended her stupidity but as much as she hated to give the dark haired woman her moment of enjoyment in chastising her, she admits, Irene's irritation for her is well founded. So Lisa merely sat there half listening, half thinking and fervently hoping that Jennie would not act solely on impulse and give her a chance to explain.

**"I feel for you, Manoban. Believe me, I do."**

Irene dramatized, her face resembling a pitying look then her eyes narrowed on Lisa once again.

**"But tell me, how long ago was that? Coz' if this cheating happened around the time you hit puberty,"**

It was hard not to miss the threat in her tone even before she said,

**"I will claw your guts out and sell it on Ebay."**

Probably borne out of fear or worry that among other things that were obvious, she also has a fetish for human organs and would really go to such grotesque lengths out of annoyance for her, Lisa found herself obligated to answer.

**"College."**

Irene blew off an unladylike snort, stopped pacing and rolled her eyes to show her disapproval or maybe dismay.

**"Your excusable period, as the party that got cheated on, for feeling hurt, betrayed or whatever has lapsed a long time ago. Right now, your inappropriate behavior is no longer excused! Move the hell on! What's with you holding this grudge for so long?! Don't you find it exhausting?!"**

Crossing her arms over her chest, she narrowed her gaze at Lisa and added,

**"You-you—God! You annoy me so much right now. I'm not feeling fabulous, just to let you know. I was so looking forward to weltering in my own misery—which frankly speaking, I am entitled to because the freaking love of my life introduced me to his fiancé!"**

Surprised about that little detail regarding Mino, Lisa slouched further into the couch. She could not think of anything to say to Jennie's best friend. Not even a sympathetic word for her feelings or a smart retort or an excuse to save herself from all the valid points Irene was saying. Because, as Lisa realized during her talk with Niki, there's no justification for the way she had prolonged this ill will. It did not do her any good and it certainly didn't help with what could have been a memorable night with Jennie.

Plain and simple. Lisa was stupid. And it's this kind of stupidity that bugs people out, even herself.

**"Look, I'm no Dr. Phil obviously but—is it possible that your reason for nurturing this stupid hurt is because for the first time in your stellar life you got dumped by a girl?"**

Irene speculated further, her tone steady on the exasperated scale.

**"Something no one expected, not even you, because hey, you're the Lisa Manoban!"**

She uncrossed her arms to make air quotes as the small woman mentioned her name.

**"Ever since you grew adolescent hair, you've lived with the fact that every girl will fall for your charms and whatnot and because of this, you can't imagine anyone not wanting to be with you. The idea, to you, is simply preposterous! This Niki, not that I condone what she did coz' I'm no fan of cheaters either, but she is the first and only girl to break that streak you have going for years."**

**"So the arrogance plus the hurt went into a nasty, cynical, whorish mode, to prove to this girl you can have any female you want at the same time you want to forget the hurt instead of dealing with it the normal and mature way,"**

she elaborated.

**"How am I doing so far, Manoban?"**

**"I'd say pretty accurate . . . but that's just my opinion,"**

Seulgi suddenly butted in—mouth full of food while strutting towards another couch right across from Lisa—like she's very at home in the apartment, as she came out from the kitchen carrying a plate filled with about three types of food.

Irene no more than gave the bear-like woman a cursory glance before swinging her vision back at Lisa who had a slight feeling that her best friend had something to do with her summation of what caused her not so wise behavior.

**"And I apparently gave you more credit than I should have, Manoban. Now, I don't know . . ."**

Irene trailed off briefly with a disappointed shake of the head.

**". . . what made Jennie love you but she does and I can only imagine what she's thinking after you just ran off."**

That's what Lisa was worried about too. In her head, despite Irene's unending tirade, she was begging to whatever imaginary being is out there to please,

*please*

give her another chance to be able to show Jennie just how much she means to her. She just wants to see her. Even if she throws a fit or throws any heavy object at her, she'll take it so long as she's physically present. Because, at least if she's there, it means she did not completely shut her off . . . yet.

God, Lisa hates herself with a passion!



**"Manoban! Thousands of people die everyday from poverty and you sit there shaking your head!"**

Irene's high pitched voice snapped Lisa out of her thoughts, making her raise her lolling head with a confused look as she noted the pinched expression on her face, hands on her hips in a challenging stance. Lisa has no idea how the world's poverty rate is even remotely related to the reason for the small woman's rants.

**"This is the part where your eyes grow wide as saucers, your mouth drops in surprise and after a moment to gather your wits at the startling information which I so generously provided, you ask me in a disbelieving tone, she loves me?!"**

**"I know,"**

Lisa groaned, her hands threading through her head and nearly pulling a fistful of her chestnut colored hair.

**"I am disappointed, Manoban, just so you know."**

**"I know."**

**"Makes me wonder why you were so happy when you told us you two are gonna stay married past five years . . ."**

**"I know . . . she loves me,"**

Lisa clarified in a low voice, as if she's almost ashamed to admit what she knew after what she just did.

**"And to think I was actually convinced you felt the same way—wait, you know?"**

**"Yes."**

**"So you flew back to—"**

Lisa met her wife's best friend gaze and rejoined without hesitation,

**"To tell her I feel the same way."**

**"Oh."**

Irene uttered slightly flabbergasted. She had an inkling that Lisa also feels something for Jennie but as to how deep these feelings run, she has yet to decide. But as her hands dropped to her sides when she straightened, she was quite surprised to see the honesty in the Thai woman's eyes and the defeated posture she exuded sitting there in her couch.

**"You love her too,"**

Irene whispered broodingly. Lisa nodded.

**"Great..."**

Seulgi said, her mouth still stuffed with food.

**"Now you say this. It's a little late, don't you think?"**

**"It's not late!"**

Lisa contradicted with force but she's convincing herself more than she was telling Seulgi.

**"Whatever dude,"**

Seulgi retorted before standing up to trudge back to the kitchen.

**"Hey! Who told you to eat my food, Kang?!"**

Irene suddenly shrieked, following after Seulgi as if she just realized her kitchen had been invaded.

**"I'm hungry! I'm so hungry that when I look at you I don't see you, I see a piece of pepperoni—a thin piece but when you're as starved as I am, everything looks tasty. That's how hungry I am."**

**"Pepperoni?! I don't look or smell like a freaking pepperoni!—and you can't just go prowling in other people's apartment for food!"**

**"I just did. Sue me,"**

Seulgi uttered nonchalantly.

**"Bae, if you're hungry then eat. I'm begging you, just let me eat in peace. Tonight's fiasco made me miss dinner. It's never good for my state of mind to miss a meal. So chill and eat."**

Lisa sighed from her spot on the couch as the two argued amidst the distant sounds of dinnerware being taken out from cabinets or drawers and being laid on the kitchen counter or table. Resting her nape on the backrest of the couch, she looked up at Irene's ceiling and drowned out the already garbled voices coming from the kitchen.

Everything went so horribly wrong when it could have gone so right. She could have been in her own house, in her room with Jennie enjoying and celebrating their marriage and their newfound love, instead she's here in Irene's place, the recipient of her sermons and worrying sick about the possible outcome of tonight's events for her married life.

If there's anyone to blame for this ugly turn, it's her and not Niki. Even if that woman is the reason for her fucked up state of mind, it's entirely her fault for letting her life revolve around the wrong the latter did to her. She held back on her emotions because of it. She restricted the good things that she could have experienced because of it.

And more importantly, she might have just squandered the happiness she found with Jennie because of it.

Lisa cannot hate herself any more than she does right now. No, not even Irene's anger or Seulgi's irritation can level up to it.

*God, her family will hate her too.*

If Chloe, Brad's or Adam's reaction earlier is anything to go by, the worse is yet to come once the rest of the family learns about this.

*There's no doubt about it.*

Her grandfather will probably really ship her to military school now or worse, will not even think twice disowning her.

*Stupid, stupid!*

She was too caught up in her self loathing that she failed to hear the soft ding of the elevator doors as it opened to allow another person to step into the apartment. It wasn't until that person's familiar voice spoke that Lisa jolted upright from her drooped position in the couch to look past the person who arrived in hopes of seeing Jennie's familiar form.

**"Didn't expect to see you here Manoban,"**

Mino drawled as he eyed Lisa somewhat smugly and with only a hint of surprise finding her in Irene's abode.

**"Where's my wife?"**

Lisa asked at once.

**"Is that what she is? I thought she's your business partner . . . one you can just ditch when you feel like it."**

Choosing to overlook the derision, reminding herself that apart from being a concerned and protective brother, he is also the only person who knows where Jennie is. In this instance, it's a wiser choice not to butt heads with him.

Lisa let the insolence pass but demanded again in what she thought was a reasonable tone,

**"Tell me where she is."**

Mino chuckled crudely.

**"What for? To explain? Come on, Manoban, we all know your marriage to my sister was arranged. No need to trouble yourself with an explanation. You do your thing and she will do hers."**

Knowing that she was being goaded, Lisa forced to keep calm and

collected when she spoke. "Mino," she began.

**"Regardless of the terms of my marriage to Nini, whichever way you see it, she's still my wife—"**

**"Yeah, she's a wife alright. You claimed her legally and physically!"**

Mino spat, walking closer to Lisa with an antagonistic face.

**"I never did approve of you, Manoban. I had absolutely no reason to and Chaerin choosing you didn't help any to sway my head differently. But for my sister's sake, since she seemed determined to stick by you for the length of that fucking arrangement, I told myself to give you a chance . . ."**

He laughed without humor.

**"But we all know what happened to that chance, don't we?"**

**"You're annoyed, angry—furious even. So insult me all you want! I fucking deserve it,"**

Lisa clamored. She felt overwhelmed with impatience and frustration since it seems like getting information from Mino will be like pulling teeth.

**"Just tell me where Nini is."**

**"What makes you think she wants to see you?!"**

**"Maybe she doesn't . . ."**

**"And rightly so!"**

Mino cut her off.

**"She never was a good judge of character especially with the people she involves in her life."**

**"Doesn't mean you have to influence her decision or make her doubt what her instincts tell her!"**

Lisa retorted accusingly, her earlier resolve to stay calm no matter how much taunting Jennie's brother gets flying out of her mind in seconds.

**"She's a grown woman. She's smart enough to decide in her best interest. Don't insult her intelligence. And don't forget, she's also my wife. You have no right to keep her from me."**

**"Like you have no right to hurt her!"**

Mino quickly threw back at Lisa with a disdainful look down Lisa's head to toe length.

**"She doesn't deserve you, Manoban, so if you're thinking I will tell you where she is . . . you're dead wrong."**

The hands hanging idly on her sides clenched into fists as Lisa strived to control herself from taking a jab at Mino.

**"And because you think I don't deserve her, it's your duty to look for someone who does? You're not her fairy godmother! What goes on between me and Nini is none of you goddamn business!"**

**"You're absolutely right. But you made it my business when you ditched her after seeing Niki."**

**"I don't care about Niki! She's all yours! And if there's anyone I have to explain to, it's certainly not you. It's Nini."**

Mino merely snorted, his stance both impertinent and supercilious, letting Lisa know he didn't give a cent to whatever the Thai woman is saying.

He was gloating, that was very obvious to Lisa. The knowledge of where Jennie is gave him every right gloat and she sensed that Mino was doing this on purpose to piss her off. But Lisa still held on to that very thin thread of rationality for the sake of Jennie. "

**"Where is she?"**

**"In a place where she feels safe."**

**"Where is my wife?"**

Lisa persisted.

**"Get it through your thick skull, Manoban. I am not telling you,"**

Mino hissed.

**"We may not know of your past but it was clear to us when you ran off how much Niki still affects you. Even a person with half a brain would have seen that!"**

**"It's none of your business what I want to do! Tell me where she is!"**

**"I can't do anything to whatever voodoo you cleverly cast on my sister to make her feel something for you. But don't expect me to hand her to you like an offering. While you fled and chit chatted with Niki, the person you refer to as your wife looked so lost, insecure, ashamed and betrayed. The last time she looked like that was when her father died and she learned she was being arranged to marry a complete stranger—you!"**

Mino pointed a finger at Lisa, his earlier composure also slipping away.

**"So put yourself in my shoe Manoban, and tell me . . . would you give Jennie to an asshole like you—"**

The bit of info about how Jennie took her leaving made the anger and frustration inside her, directed mostly at herself and at Mino, coupled with a sense of foreboding, crawling up her skin, collided with her heart and settled in her brain just as the word 'asshole' escaped Mino's lips, causing Lisa to let go of the control she was desperately clinging to.

Lisa, without any hesitation, threw a punch at Mino, cutting short his angry outburst and momentarily shocking the latter as Lisa's fist connected with the side of his face and as soon as he recovered answered the punch with one of his own.

Then all hell broke loose.

Irene came rushing in from the kitchen, with Seulgi right on her tail, to investigate what the sudden commotion was about. Thinking Lisa had gone berserk because of her stupidity. The small woman was ready to deliver yet another tirade at the Thai for disturbing her very late dinner but she found herself dumbfounded when she saw the two aggressive bears in her living room throwing punches and cuss words at each other like they both seriously contemplated one should live and the other should definitely die.

And based on the

*omphs*

, the thwacks, the grunts, the groans and the bone cracking sounds Irene is hearing, it will most likely be the case when it ends.

Seulgi rushed past Irene's frozen form to stand between the two butting heads.

**"Stop it!"**

She shouted to both, alternately pushing them apart on opposite sides of the room which was a useless effort as Lisa and Mino kept seeking each other out, neither one planning to back down.

**"Irene! A little help would be nice!"**

**"No way!"**

Irene squeaked, snapping out of her shock.

**"I don't plan on getting caught in a stupid wrestling match!"**

**"Not the best time to be a diva, Irene."**

Seulgi grumbled as she continued to separate the two wrestling idiots and at the same time dodge a wayward jab from either one.

**"I will restrain Lisa . . . pull him back . . ."**



Seulgi shoved Mino off her side and towards Irene's direction.

**"Now!"**

**"Mino stop!"**

Irene shouted while trying to hold down Mino's arms and nudge him backwards with all her might—which was nothing compared to him.

**"Lisa! Let it go!"**

**"Shit..."**

**"Ouch!"**

**"My couch! Oh, you will pay for that . . . dammit!"**

**"Watch it!"**

**"Son of –"**

**"Had enough?"**

**"Bring it on!"**

**"Ah, fuck you both!"**

**"I'm calling security and have you two arrested!"**

**"Stop it!"**

**"Watch the table! Watch the table—aarrgh!"**

Red with fury over Lisa and Mino's manly display of dislike for one another and the fact that her precious furniture is one by one becoming collateral damage to their physical exertion of force, a fed up Irene grabbed a large vase beautifully painted with Chinese art and purposely threw it in the center of the room.

It landed with a loud crash, breaking into uneven pieces and scattering in several directions from the impact. So much for the expensive vase but it did pause the tussling match that was

happening on her carpeted floor between Lisa and Mino and an unfortunate Seulgi who got caught in the middle of the disputing pair.

**"Christ! I think I broke a rib,"**

Seulgi groaned from under Mino and Lisa. She has no idea how she ended up under them.

**"Get off me you dumbasses!"**

Seulgi pushed against the weight pinning her down while Irene assisted to pull her upright.

**"This is the worst night of my life! I will charge you both for my medical bills—with interest for emotional distress!"**

**"Not only that. You jerks will be billed for all the damaged furniture in here!"**

Irene added with much feeling, shooting dagger gazes at the two.

As they scrambled to stand, Lisa gave a long glare to Mino who did the same to the Thai then she limped to the couch she sat on before their riot occurred. Lisa winced with every sudden or speedy movement . . . she surmised, Seulgi may not be the only one with a broken rib. She tasted blood from what she assumed was a cut on her lower lip, one side of her face and her knuckles hurt like hell but it gave her a sense of satisfaction when she saw Mino in the same bruised and swollen condition as herself.

As Irene expressed her consternation and anger over their childish behavior and for thrashing her living room, Lisa's heavy intake of air evened out along with most of her anger and she addressed the same query to Mino once more.

**"Why do you still insist?"**

Mino replied, his tone slowly calming down.

**"I will not tell you so you better give it up, Manoban. Let my sister be."**

**"No!"**

**"Why?"**

**"Shut the hell up!"**

Irene shouted.

**"Take it somewhere else. Go to an arena, a gym, a fight club. I don't care! Just get the hell out of my apartment!"**

But she was ignored as Lisa answered Mino in a hoarse but unyielding voice,

**"Because I love her . . . and I don't plan on letting her go."**

Startled by the unexpected admission coming from his sister's husband, Mino did not utter an immediate come back. He stared at Lisa with a slightly astonished but pondering frown. With a face that gave away nothing, he assessed the woman his sister admits to have fallen in love with, remembering his earlier conversation with Jennie regarding Lisa.

**"Are you sure?"**

*If the question and tone itself failed to express his doubt, the look on his face was a clear mask of skepticism.*

**"Yes."**

**"Proximity is not love, Jennie. It may seem like it now but a few years more and you'll realize it's just the result of living together in one roof and sharing the same bed."**

**"No, it's not like that at all, Mino. I know it isn't,"**

*Jennie maintained, smiling serenely which unnerved him a little bit.*

*He expected her to cry but after leaving the restaurant, then driving around in silence and with no particular destination in mind, they found themselves seated on cold sand and staring out the darkness of the*

*beach, each to their own thought.*

*Mino heard her sigh some time later then his sister whispered, "I love her."*

*He knew it was also one way of telling him that despite what happened, despite what her husband did and despite her knowing about the past with Niki, she still hopes that maybe it's only a momentary lapse of judgment on Lisa's part.*

**"How?!"**

*He clipped as he shot her an irate sideways glance.*

**"She asked me to stay married to her past five years."**

**"That's not a good enough reason."**

**"Mino, do you love Niki? Even after all this."**

*Surprised by Jennie's question, he simply nodded.*

**"Why . . . what made you fall for her?"**

**"She compliments me,"**

*Mino answered after a long silence. "Does your husband compliment you too? Are you two even compatible?"*

*She smiled. "I think we are but it's not just that. She makes me happy. I don't know how to explain it to you and you probably will think it's silly but . . . it's, it's the little things that she does . . ." Jennie trailed off as if her thought drifted back to the times when Lisa did those little things she was referring to.*

*Mino may not agree with her but after what happened with Niki chasing Lisa, who is he to question how she feels? He heaved a sigh and asked, "You're going back to that woman? You're not even sure she feels the same for you, Jen."*

**"No. You're right about one thing, Mino. She should find me and explain. As her wife, she owes me that,"**

*Jennie reasoned, surprising her brother yet again and somewhat pleasing him for taking into consideration his advice. "So, I'm going home."*

**"Home?—Which home?"**

*Jennie told him and although Mino didn't want to let her sister go, Jennie was firm in her decision and no amount of swaying to do otherwise or consider other choices could change her mind.*

*In the end, he gave in and let her go. Yet, fervently, he hoped the faith she placed on her husband will not be in vain. Or he will personally make sure Lisa Manoban will regret ever hurting his sister.*

Comparing Jennie's relationship with Lisa to what he had in years invested with Niki, he had to admit the two managed to surprise him earlier when he witnessed their rather poignant reunion and liplock in the restaurant. And after what occurred tonight, he couldn't help but ask, is his relationship with Niki more stable than what his sister has with Lisa?

Mino was no longer certain.

Yes, Jennie didn't know about Lisa's past but entering into an arranged marriage with someone you hardly know, would you expect her to recount her past that easily?

As he thinks about it, although out of protectiveness he labels Lisa quite the prick for letting his sister feel insecure and uncertain, he can't say he expects much from the woman what with the kind of marriage she was thrust into.

He can even say that her reaction, under the circumstances, was normal. Whereas, Niki's actions weren't . . . and to think that they are the ones with the longer relationship that went through the normal process of development.

Mino smirked at the unexpected confession of love from Lisa but was quickly turned into a wince because of the swelling of his face. He cursed quietly, carefully rubbing a hand over the swollen skin, then he instructed her,

**"Go home, Lisa."**

A part of him felt relieved that his sister made the right decision.

**"Not until you tell me where she is . . . please...I'm begging you Mino...I love her."**

Mino shook his head.

**"If you really love her like you say, you should know where to find her."**

**"That's it!"**

Irene interrupted again, flailing both arms in the air out of frustration.

**"Enough chatter. I want you out! You!"**

She jabbed a finger at Lisa's chest.

**"Get your ass out of here and go find Jennie."**

Then she whirled around to face Mino, thoroughly annoyed.

**"And you—I don't want to see you or talk to you ever again! Get the hell out!"**

**"No. I came here to talk to you."**

And without waiting for Irene's protest, Mino grabbed her by the arm and forcibly dragged her towards the direction of her room, promptly shutting the door as soon as they were inside.

Lisa turned to Seulgi.

**"Can you manage to drive?"**

**"Screw you, Manoban."**

**A/N:**

**...and we are nearing to the end :)**

## [27] Revealed

The days that followed stretched into a week and for the most part Lisa had spent it in the farm as she was ordered by her father and grandfather—who were nothing short of disappointed in her for the callous way she had treated Jennie because of Niki—to go back and finish her stay there.

It was supposed to be a short stay, not lasting more than two days, but whether punishment for her inappropriate behavior towards her wife or just mere coincidence, a labor dispute that she belatedly learned had been brewing for some time happened the day she was scheduled to leave.

Given no choice and being one of the owners, Lisa deferred her departure to settle the disputing parties and help them come to an amicable agreement.

It was long, tedious and immensely exhausting on her part and especially because deep inside, the longer she stayed in the farm and unable to go about finding Jennie, she began to feel the deepest despair she had ever known. Even deeper than that she'd suffered when she learned Niki engaged herself to another man.

Then, she had Niki to lay fault on. It was the cheating woman who did her wrong therefore her anger and irrational behavior was justified. Now, Lisa had no one to blame but herself. And what pains her the most is that she hurt the one person who treated her with honesty, accepted her imperfections and loved her despite the odds.

She was a sorry excuse for a husband. She deserves the anguish and the sense of loss and the ache in her heart she is suffering for days now and she couldn't do anything to relieve her misery.

Jennie is the only one who can get her out of her desolation.



She is unworthy of the brunette's love but at the same time Lisa longs for it. She wants to hear her Nini say I love you and she wants to say the same three words back.

Lisa would give anything for a chance to say it to her wife.

But to do that, she must first figure out what home Jennie is referring to when she told Mino she's going home. Yes, the guy somehow took pity on her and told her of Jennie's plan. She had been ecstatic after being told of it but she was so stupid to think it would be that easy. Because

*Home,*

as it turns out, wasn't their house. It isn't Jennie's parent's house nor is it a friend's house or even a new house the brunette acquired without her knowledge.

For the life of her, Lisa couldn't figure out what home Jennie was saying to Mino or if it's even a home. And of course, there's the possibility that Mino gave her false information to keep her from finding where his sister really is.

*You did this to yourself.*

The lonely voice in Lisa's head repeatedly said.

And she can't really argue because it's true.

She was ashamed of herself but the need to find her wife would always prevail even when she was in the middle of solving the labor problems in the farm.

Everyday, Lisa would call the missing brunette's phone. Never mind that the Thai got so frustrated for always getting her voicemail—which Lisa did not leave messages on because what she will say to Jennie needs to be said in person.

Still Lisa would call without fail.

Sometimes the Thai would even call the studio on the off chance that she'd get lucky and be able to let the brunette know that she

needs to see her, that they need to talk in person, that she's asking for a chance to apologize and be heard. But after giving a somewhat plausible excuse to the people there as to why Lisa knew nothing about Jennie's whereabouts without seeming like an ass who misplaced her wife, she received news—albeit reluctantly told—from Jennie's assistant that her wife took an indefinite leave of absence, it became clear that luck wasn't on Lisa's side.

Irene was another option Lisa took a chance on. The small woman conveyed she was annoyed with Lisa and had narrated several reasons to warrant such annoyance when the Thai talked to her. Yet, Lisa still pleaded her case, appealed to the kindness of her wife's best friend's heart to ease a friend of worry and heartache.

But the small woman answered with,

**"She could be anywhere. She may be off at some rainforest snapping shots at a hot male model posed suggestively against a tree. Or she could be in a remote, hard-to-pronounce-name village painting a tribal flame on the incredibly defined abs of a half naked male model. In short, Manoban, I don't know where she is. She didn't tell me when she called the other day and I didn't ask. If you really love her, you can find her."**

And Lisa's heart sank even further.

Lisa lived with the fear that she would find her wife having decided she didn't want to invest any more time and energy and emotion on a woman who held on to the past and couldn't be honest with her at the very least. If only she'd been more reasonable, wiser . . .

If Lisa could wish for any power right now, she'd wish for the power to turn back time.

*If. So many ifs*

. Lisa thought angrily as she looked out the window of the moving car that picked her up at Jeju's international airport. The driver had been instructed by her father to pick her up and bring her directly to the Manoban's estate. Lisa had no doubt, despite the long delay the problem in the farm caused, she will receive the full wrath of



**long you never stopped blaming the rest of the female population for one girl's transgressions! I expected more from you, Lisa. I hope you realize the mistake you did could cost you a lot more than you can imagine—and I'm not talking about the business dealings we have with Jennie's family."**

**"Regardless if you think you've grown up or not,"**

Patrick spoke next, his voice holding a sharp edge of ire and Lisa noted he unconsciously tapped his cane on the shiny floors after each word.

**"The point is you acted damned immature when you traipsed off the restaurant like Niki has some kind of disease that only you can be infected with, leaving your wife wondering why you suddenly sprinted away and left her there! Did it even cross your mind that she might be going crazy trying to understand why you did that?"**

**"Not at first,"**

Lisa answered wearily.

**"Are you even sorry—"**

**"Yes! I am sorry. I will forever be sorry for letting her be in that predicament, for hurting her,"**

Lisa shouted, frustration evident on her face as she harshly ran a hand through her messy chestnut colored hair. She wasn't angry at them. The anger has been self directed ever since this started.

**"I made the mistake. I know that. I admit it! I'm sorry to disappoint all of you."**

There was a moment of silence. Her mother slowly shaking her head at the weary Lisa, then Marco said,

**"Knowing your mistake doesn't make it right."**

**"For heaven's sake, Lisa,"**

Her grandfather sighed heavily, his tone somewhat tempered considerably.

**"You should be thankful that even when you and Niki didn't end well, for once in your life you got the chance to love someone with all your heart. And for you to have another chance at a love like that is an immense blessing already. Not many people get the chance that you have."**

**"Do I . . ."**

Lisa paused, drew a deep breath as the words struck her like her grandfather was giving her hope, then she continued.

**"Do you really think I still have that chance with Nini after a week of not hearing from her or knowing where she is? Because, Grandpa . . . Dad, Mom, I drove myself up the wall trying to think where she might be or if anytime now she suddenly decides to give up on me. Just . . . I have to find her! I can't stand waking up everyday and not know where she is, what she's doing or if she's also thinking about me!"**

**"If she does, will you give up too?"**

Alicia asked expressionlessly, looking straight into her daughter's eyes.

**"No!"**

Her mother remained where she was a full minute, never taking her eyes off her daughter, then she stepped forward to envelope Lisa in a tight hug.

Thunderstruck by the sudden gesture, Lisa was unsure how to react at first but the gentle embrace did somehow lessen the tension and the tiredness in her and she realized how much she needed an act of kindness shown to her after several depressing days. It also bolstered her determination even before Alicia angled her face slightly to whisper to her ear.

**"Don't ruin your chance this time, Lisa. It's the last you'll get."**

Lisa pushed off a little to look at her mother, frowning. And when her mother let her go with a soft pat to her chest, she raised her vision to her father and grandfather who bore no traces of their earlier anger, instead they were nodding slowly at what her mother said.

**"You know where she is?"**

Lisa asked. Inexplicably, her insides felt like it was beginning to get jumpy and her pulse was slowly picking up pace.

Alicia smiled.

**"Go to her. She's in the sunroom."**

As the import of her mother's words slammed into her head, Lisa was stunned at first, then agitation and stuttering words.

**"She's—she . . . here? I . . . how long . . . you didn't—tell me—"**

**"Try not to stutter when you talk to her,"**

Patrick advised gravely. He was being helpful—at least he thinks so.

**"She doesn't know you're coming. She asked us not to let you know she's staying here,"**

Alicia added as some sort of forewarning.

**"She believed you'll figure out where she is . . . I did too but sadly we were wrong because you weren't thinking."**

Lisa was so dazed by the outcome of her day which she was so sure would end badly like the previous days before since Jennie's disappearance that she stood frozen on the spot.

*Home. Home!*

Screamed the voice.

*My family is your family too.*

Lisa told Jennie once and the brunette had thanked her for giving



ever so slowly the brunette turned as if to check if she associated the right person to the voice. When Jennie saw her, she swayed shakily as her mind refused to function for a few seconds. The balloon she was holding and trying to tie for the air not to escape fell from limp hands, whizzed a few distances, propelled by the released air, and landed flat on the edge of the rectangular table.

Jennie could not believe her eyes. It took several mental attempts to convince her brain that her eyes isn't playing tricks on her. That

*she's*

real. In the flesh and standing before her.

**"I-I'm fine,"**

Jennie heard herself replying.

Overcome with relief, Lisa took in the sight of the brunette in a casual printed shirt, shorts and her feet in flipflops and her hair on a messy bun atop her head. She's beautiful. Even with her eyes lacking its usual brightness or the usual tilt of her lips as though always poised for a smile missing, the Thai woman stood there mesmerized by her wife's beauty.

**"I'm not,"**

Lisa rasped.

**"I need you . . ."**

Lisa was using all of her control to keep from coming closer to her, to tuck the loose curls that fell on her face, wrap her in a tight embrace, feel her against her, smell her intoxicating scent and kiss her senseless to alleviate her fucked up state.

But at the same time, Lisa didn't feel worthy of all that privilege.

So unworthy.

She was stupid beyond excuse. Insensitive and had been inconsiderate of her wife's feelings. She's a jerk. But she's willing to



make amends, willing to do anything to earn back the right to be her friend, her husband, her lover.

Jennie tried to assimilate what she was seeing . . . Lisa is here. Slowly, she ran brown eyes over her length, noting the unkempt hair that seem in dire need of a haircut, the dark shadows that lined the sides of her face and the deep lines under her dark hazel eyes that said the past days had been difficult for her as they'd been for her. The Thai's clothes were not any better. She looked like she had been living in the streets but she didn't care.

Lisa was there standing just within arm's reach looking back at her adoringly. It's what the brunette's been wishing for since she came here.

**"Do you?"**

**"Nini . . ."**

Lisa began with a pained voice

**. "I'm so sorry for hurting you. If I could come up with a better line, a better way to tell you how sorry I am, I will gladly do it. I regret every second of my stupidity that caused you to worry, to feel insecure, to doubt . . ."**

A paused followed as Lisa tried to organize her thoughts, then she said softly, persuasively.

**"I should've realized this sooner . . . if I hadn't let my experience with Niki cloud my decisions. There's no excuse for that, I know, but regardless of my cynic attitude when I got to know you . . . I found you on my mind far, far too often than I expected. In the brief time that we've been together, I made you an integral part of my life without even knowing I was doing it. God! I miss you so much, Nini."**

Lisa drew a long, labored breath, her eyes imploring.

**"I don't know how to say this after what I did, but you and I spent times together that were above the ordinary for anyone forced into each others company. We laughed and talked and**

**learned we had a lot in common. It happened naturally . . . we were good together . . . we still are,"**

Lisa gave the brunette in front of her a hopeful smile.

**"Lisa—"**

Lisa wasn't planning on giving her a chance to object. She needed her to hear everything she was feeling, to assure her that the love she felt for her wasn't wasted.

**"Please give me another chance, Nini. I won't force you to forgive me, just a chance to show you that what we shared before all this happened wasn't pretense. It meant something. You mean something to me . . .I can't go back to Gangnam without you. I won't."**

Jennie understood what the Thai was trying to say and it somehow made her lightheaded but she was concerned still. Just being good together isn't enough anymore. It had hurt to know her husband's heart belongs to someone else when her own heart belongs to her.

**"What about Niki?"**

Lisa could see the curiosity coupled with the pain in her eyes which pained her too.

**"What about her?"**

**"She's still important to you,"**

Jennie stated even though it hurt to say it. She hesitated a moment then added,

**"I—your dad insisted I stay in your old room when I came here. I saw the pictures of you and Niki—I'm sorry I didn't mean to snoop. It was in the drawer I was using."**

**"Nini . . ."**

Jennie ignored her.

**"She was your girlfriend."**

Lisa nodded.

**"You love her,"**

Jennie concluded swallowing against the constriction in her throat. She lived with the fear that Lisa would find her having decided that the Thai didn't want to continue with their marriage any more because she's still in love with her former girlfriend. She promised herself that she won't burden her husband with living up to her end of the arrangement, if it is what happens.

Lisa thought she heard the brunette's voice break. But she was quick to correct her assumption.

**"No."**

Lisa uttered with certainty then unable to take the distance any longer, she closed the gap between them and gently held Jennie's face with both hands.

**"Nini, it's you,"**

Lisa murmured gazing deeply into the brunette's searching chocolate eyes.

**"I didn't think I could be capable of feeling so strongly for someone again but you taught me. You proved me wrong."**

Jennie was paralyzed by the Thai's closeness, the tender caress of the latter's thumb against her cheek and the intense hazel pools of her eyes. God, she missed Lisa! But she had to be sure.

**"What do you mean?"**

Gently leaning her forehead against the brunette's, Lisa's hands dropped from framing her face to trail down her arms and sought to lace her fingers through Jennie's.

**"You are what I never thought I always wanted,"**

Lisa whispered hoarsely and gave a small smile.

**"It's been you all along."**

**"Please don't say that . . . if you don't mean it,"**

Jennie begged, and she found herself gripping the Thai's wrists with both hands.

**"I don't want you to feel obligated—"**

Lisa pressed a finger against her lips to stop her while shaking her head.

**"Obligation is me staying in the farm to settle labor problems when I could have used that time to gather my wits and realize you're here all along. It's not obligation that you linger in every corner of my thoughts and my heart."**

Tears welled unchecked from the brunette's eyes. Jennie couldn't help it. Lisa's eyes became a reflection of the pain she had been feeling and just the thought that she's there willing absorb the hurt, the insecurity and the fear she had felt made her come to the brink of understanding why she fell in love with the Thai woman.

**"Oh Nini . . . please don't cry,"**

Lisa drew her in a tight embrace.

**"I'm so sorry."**

Jennie shook her head as she made a shaky effort to control her tears and pulled back slightly from the Thai's chest.

**"T-thank you . . . for-for being here, Lisa,"**

she touched her cheek with one hand, overwhelmed by what she feels for her husband

**. "I missed you too . . . so much."**

Jennie sensed the Thai's breathing had changed, then her eyes took

on an intense dark color that sent shudders to run down her spine. She stood in there staring back at her husband—forgetting the days past where she would sit in her room for a long time drowning in desolation with her legs drawn up against her chest thinking of her, relieving all the unforgettable times spent with her, their teasing and flirting and laughter, the time they became friends, the night they made love and of course, the day Lisa asked her to stay married to her outside of the agreement.

Instead, with her being here voicing out the tender words Jennie only dream she'd hear from her, joy sluiced down on her because these memories were the reason why she felt a wonderful sense of oneness with Lisa . . . these helped shape their relationship.

Their eyes held, then Lisa turned her head to kiss the brunette's palm. A brief smile lifted on the Thai's lips before they fell serious again.

**"I don't just miss you . . ."**

Her hands dropped to trail down on the brunette's arms and then he threaded her fingers with hers, tightening her grip.

**"I love you, Jennie Manoban."**

Time stood still and Jennie felt a moment of intense elation. She searched Lisa's face, saw the sincerity and longing and with a small throaty cry she flung herself against the Thai woman, arms looping around her neck and clinging, crying even more.

Lisa's arms, too, circled her steadfastly while she pressed her face in the crook of the brunette's warm neck. She rocked her back and forth, standing surefooted amidst the shiny balloons scattered on the floor around their feet, molding her body firmly to hers, drawing comfort from her nearness and not wanting to let go.

**"I love you . . . I love you so...."**

Lisa repeated, kissing Jennie's temple.

Jennie held her husband's face, leaned her forehead on hers and her voice grew gruff with emotion.

**"I love you too."**

**"Say it again, Nini . . . please..."**

Lisa said quietly.

Jennie stared at her for a full ten seconds, tears of joy streaming down her cheeks, then she said,

**"I love you, Lisa Manoban."**

Lisa tenderly wiped the tears on Jennie's face with the pads of her thumbs and confided,

**"I think I loved you when I saw you in our kitchen with your mouth full of gummy bears and yogurt."**

Lifting her chin, Lisa was graced by Jennie's lovely gummy smile and the sound of her teary giggle. She couldn't help but bend her head to the brunette's and let their mouths fused wordlessly. Silky, wet tongues tangling together, releasing the ache each had endured during their separation, seeking to make up for the emptiness of the days apart and speaking of the loneliness and misery about to end in bliss.

The greedy but glorious kiss lasted for endless minutes until their breaths were labored and their blood pounded furiously. Lisa's palms slid to the brunette's hips, drawing them securely against her hard curves.

Then she tore her mouth away to press a kiss into the scented side of her wife's neck and as Jennie angled her head, she whispered roughly,

**"Come with me . . ."**

**"Yes . . . but, Lisa,"**

Jennie answered in a shaky voice as she cradled the back of the Thai's head, pressing the latter's lips closer to her skin.

**"I have to finish decorating this room . . ."**

She had promised Patrick she'd do this. She didn't want to break that promise especially because it's his day and besides she's nearly done anyway so it wouldn't take too long.

Lisa lifted her head in confusion.

**"I must've been out in the farm too long. Am I missing something here? What's the occasion?"**

**"Today is Grandpa's birthday!"**

Jennie clamored.

**"There's a party tonight."**

Lisa frowned, noted the seriousness in her wife's eyes and after awhile a smile tugged at the corners of her mouth.

**"His birthday is not for three months."**

**"But—"**

Jennie gaped at her, dumbfounded while Lisa could almost see the wheels of her brain were turning to give an explanation as to why the family would lie to her about Patrick's birthday.

**"Yesterday I told them I was leaving . . . coz' I didn't think you'd still come for me . . . they tricked me into staying longer!"**

**"Aren't you glad they're meddlesome like that?"**

Jennie seemed to pause to consider this thought and when she looked back at Lisa, her eyes were alight with love and happiness.

**"Oh yes . . . definitely."**

With all her weariness dissipated, Lisa chuckled as her strong arms clinched her hips.

**"The decorations are fantastic though. Grandpa will be ecstatic to know the decorations are already set up in advance for his**

**birthday."**

**"I'm so gullible,"**

Jennie pouted.

Smiling, Lisa dipped her head low and with infinite tenderness she briefly traced Jennie's luscious pouting lips with the tip of her tongue.

**"There's nothing I don't love about you, Nini . . . nothing."**

Lisa vowed with all her heart.



## [28] My Gift - M!

**"Some party huh?"**

Lisa quiet voice sounded from where she was standing next to her old study table that was still reminiscent of her high school paraphernalia.

She felt weird being in her old room again after many years yet she was certain it had nothing to do with any memories related to Niki. It was more of the length of time that passed when last she had been in it. Yet, she did notice upon stepping in earlier that her room seemed nicer and welcoming. She had no doubt it was because of Jennie staying in it. It was no longer empty and lonely. The brunette gave the room new life.

Lisa had other thoughts concerning her mind though, like the fact that Jennie looks so darn sexy in the pale yellow satin sleepwear she donned, a complete contradiction to the innocence of her expression, and how it was distracting the Thai's frame of mind from doing what it needed to do which is to tell her of her past and the effect it had on her.

Sitting on one side of the bed, Jennie turned her head slightly sideways to look at Lisa wearing a worn cotton shirt and shorts and her hair still damp from the shower she took. Lisa looks incredibly sexy and if it weren't for her awkward body stance or her eyes looking fleetingly at Jennie's, the brunette would think that the Thai is downright seducing her.

Jennie gave a small nod and smile.

**"Yeah,"**

she agreed softly, her thoughts not on the small celebration that happened earlier which had nothing to do with Patrick's birthday but more to celebrate her and Lisa's reunion. She was wondering

why Lisa seems a bit uneasy and why it looked like she was purposely lingering longer far from the bed.

**"I guess they didn't want my decorating efforts to go to waste."**

Lisa chuckled lightly but her hand was unconsciously rubbing at her nape in what Jennie was certain to be a gesture of hers when nervous. Instead of point blank asking the Thai why she was acting as such, the brunette let the awkwardness emanating from the latter run its course.

Jennie stayed silent, waiting for Lisa to say something.

Blessedly, after several minutes, the Thai did.

**"Your brother and . . . we . . . uhh, argued when he came by Irene's apartment."**

Unsure where the topic was going, Jennie went along with it while trying to figure out what could be the reason for her husband's sudden reluctance to join her on the bed. This shift in behavior from eager and possessive to reluctant and tense became obvious about two hours ago when they left the sunroom and entered her old room.

Earlier, the brunette tried not to think much of it as they went about preparing for bed. But once they were done and there wasn't anything to fidget with, she was then faced with a nervous husband. Jennie doesn't want her so uptight. She wants the sweet, warm and passionate Lisa she came to love and has grown accustomed to.

*It must be this room*

*that's making her seem awkward*

. Jennie assumed.

Lisa must've had many memories with Niki here and Jennie imagined how strange it must be for the Thai woman to be here after all these time. Of course, Lisa had said she loves her and she's really happy with that but she also understands her declaration of

love for her doesn't automatically mean she had totally erased Niki from her mind.

It doesn't make Jennie jealous or sad. She knows it takes time to forget a loved one but even if she doesn't know exactly what happened to Lisa and Niki, she's hoping that with her help, with her love, the Thai can bury her past quicker.

Because after so many days apart, the brunette just wants to be held, comforted, assured and loved.

**"You punched each other faces,"**

Jennie stated bluntly, making Lisa stare at her with a bit of shock. Giggling at her husband's wide eyed reaction, the brunette added,

**"Irene told me and she said you still owe her for the furniture you helped damage."**

**"I deserved the blows Mino gave because of what I did to you,"**

Lisa said after getting over her shock, her face back to being somber.

**"Black eye?"**

Jennie asked matching the Thai's seriousness even if she feels like smiling at what was looking like her husband's continued efforts to explain to her.

**"Bruises,"**

the Thai woman corrected gravely.

**"Busted lip."**

**"Oh yeah, Mino had the black eye."**

Lisa frowned questioningly at her.

**"Irene."**

Jennie replied casually of the unspoken query

**. "She told me what went down with you and Mino. And she kept stressing about her furniture—I think you should pay for those. They're precious to her."**

**"Nini, please, I'm being serious here."**

Jennie inched toward the middle of the bed so she was in line of Lisa's vision. She sat with her back straight and curled her legs under her.

**"Why?"**

the brunette intoned. She thought she heard a plea in Lisa's voice.

**"Are we not okay?"**

**"I should be asking you that."**

**"Okay . . ."**

Lisa sighed and after a moment's hesitation stood up and languidly made her way to the foot of the bed

**. "I want to tell you about Niki,"**

she said, remaining to stand.

**"Lisa . . . if it's still too hard for you . . . you can tell me some other time,"**

Jennie softly uttered.

The Thai woman slowly shook her head, amazed by her wife's kindness and consideration when she's the one who should be giving it to her.

**"I want to, Nini. It matters to me that you know. It was hard for me before to talk about her but now it isn't. And I should have told you this before I asked you to stay married to me outside of the arrangement."**

Soft brown eyes flickered to Lisa uncertain dark hazel ones.

**"Then tell me . . . all of it."**

With a deep breath and a glint of purpose iridescent in her eyes, Lisa began softly.

**"Niki was my girlfriend. Not my first relationship but the first one that I fell in love with."**

Her eyes never faltering from the brunette's, her voice slow and steady, Lisa told Jennie everything, how the relationship began, then lasted; how they remained committed despite the distance and the pressures of college; how Lisa was so certain of their future that she had everything planned out; how Niki came back that one time already engaged to another man—which she now knows to be Mino—and realizing their feelings was no longer mutual.

Lisa laughed with a twinge of disbelief.

**"And I carried her betrayal throughout thinking I'd take it as a reminder not to make the same mistake again. I was so wrong."**

Lisa plopped herself down on the edge of the mattress and carefully reached for Jennie's hand, holding it, then she began moving her thumb, brushing it lightly over her knuckles and the crevice between her fingers.

**"I was so overcome with anger that I didn't realize I was still clinging to the past. I should have exorcised her ghost a long time ago—I would not have hurt you if I did. I'm sorry, Nini—"**

Jennie pushed herself up in a kneeling position and moved to sit in front of the Thai, silencing the latter's apology with a finger pressed to her plump lips. She smiled at her husband, thankful that she confided, relieved that it wasn't Niki's memories that made her nervous but rather what her reaction will be and overwhelmed by the sensations that just her thumb could make her feel.

**"Lisa, apology accepted."**

Lisa stared at their joined hands before meeting Jennie's smiling eyes, wondering if she could feel the throbbing of her own heart that spoke of her intense feelings for her. Words are just not enough

to convey the Thai's emotions of both love and guilt.

Guilt because Lisa had hurt Jennie unnecessarily. Guilt because she had failed to recognize her own love for her and therefore failed to reciprocate when she should. Guilt because she made the brunette feel uncertain of herself, her love and her future with her. And adding to that is her forgiving Lisa so easily.

Lisa would have understood if Jennie took time to think of her apology but no, the brunette gave it readily. It wasn't that she was complaining but after what she did, she wanted to earn that forgiveness.

**"Why?"**

**"What do you mean why?"**

Jennie inquired a little confused.

**"Why do you forgive me just . . . so easily?"**

**"Why shouldn't I?"**

**"Nini . . . I hurt you."**

The hand holding Jennie's tightened briefly.

**"Lisa, look at me,"**

the brunette ordered gently.

**"Yes, you did hurt me and for a while I thought you were ready to get rid of me because you saw Niki again. I thought she was a long lost love and who am I to challenge that? What you shared with her is probably far meaningful than what we had at present."**

Jennie saw regret darken her husband's eyes because she made her feel that way but she shook her head, negating her assumptions, before she continued.

**"But I could not forget how you asked me for permanence in**

**our marriage and how you introduced me to your family and told me that they're mine too. That's the greatest thing anyone has ever done for me, Lisa. Ever since my mother died, I have always wanted to belong to a family again. You did that . . . only you."**

Unexpectedly at the memory of her mother, tears glimmered in Jennie's eyes. She fought against it. Her voice trembled slightly and Lisa instantly cradled her head against her warm chest. But once she drew a deep, shuddering breath, Jennie pulled back only far enough to see the Thai's face and met her intense eyes which did not smile or make light of her words. It held a strange kind of look that oddly enough comforted Jennie.

**"I know you didn't do all that just on a whim. You had to feel something for me too. Something deeper than caring. I didn't know if its love or something almost like it but I know there's a space in there for me."**

Jennie lightly jabbed a finger to Lisa's chest to indicate her heart.

**"And even though I was hurt, I was willing to gamble on that gut feeling. I only stayed away to give you time to think and sort out your feelings. I had no intention to make you suffer or prolong the agony . . . because then it would make me suffer too."**

Overwhelmed by emotion, Lisa groaned standing up from the bed as she gathered the brunette into her arms, pinning her tightly against the length of her body, clasping her head just below her neck.

**"Nini, I'll never hurt you again,"**

Lisa promised in a hoarse voice.

**"I know you won't, never knowingly,"**

Jennie murmured as she kissed the side of the Thai's neck, feeling the thrum of the latter's heart against her chest.

**"I love you, Nini, you know that now, don't you?"**

Lisa whispered.

**"Yes . . . I've had my suspicions then but now I know for sure."**

Jennie grinned at Lisa before pressing her face back to the crook of the Thai's neck, smelling faint shampoo and that familiar scent of the latter.

**"And I'm glad you can talk about Niki without anger or bitterness, you're free of her at last."**

**"All because of you."**

Lisa slid her arms down on Jennie's hips while as the Thai's head dropped down to place a kiss on the brunette's forehead.

**"Thank you for taking a risk on me."**

**"You're very welcome."**

Lisa untangled her arms from Jennie's, slowly stroking the brunette's upper arms as she smiled with no more awkwardness or uncertainty in her hazel eyes. It was a smile of happiness.

**"I have something for you."**

**"What?"**

Jennie couldn't help but smile back. Lisa's charming smile had an exhilarating effect on her.

The Thai asked her to wait as she turned away and went to retrieve something from her backpack that was sitting on one of the chairs in the room.

It didn't take long as Lisa was back in a jiffy, with one of her hands tucked behind her. She tried to be stern when the brunette playfully tugged at her arm but although she no longer looked worried, her face became grave again when she spoke.

**"The day after my altercation with Mino, I couldn't really think of anything but you. Where you were, how you must be**



**hurting and how it's my fault I can't be there to ease your pain . . . I ended up wandering the streets trying to think,"**

Lisa said as she stood in front of her wife and held one of her hands in hers.

Jennie lifted her free hand to stroke the side of Lisa's face, smiling tenderly.

**"Lisa, we're okay now. There's no . . ."**

Lisa enclosed the hand on her cheek with her own.

**"I was so scared of the prospect of losing you that in a moment of panic, it occurred to me I haven't even given you anything to even remember me by. So, I bought something for you that day."**

**"You mean like a gift?"**

the brunette asked dubiously.

The Thai nodded in affirmation, smiling at her wife's owlish expression.

**"A gift. I had it made for you."**

Then Lisa let go of Jennie's hand, brought her hidden hand forward. Lisa held her closed fist in front of the brunette, slowly opened her palms to reveal a beautiful ring dotted with heart shaped yellow canary diamonds around the entire band.

**"I've been waiting for a chance to give it to you."**

As Jennie's curious eyes dropped from Lisa's hazel eyes that seem suddenly nervous again to her open palm, Jennie gasped at the lovely, very rare kind of gem and very expensive piece of jewelry.

**"Oh my . . . Lisa, it's so gorgeous . . ."**

**"It's a promise ring,"**

Lisa whispered.

**"I should have given you something like this before our wedding as is usual for couples but we didn't exactly fall under normal. . ."**

**"It would have been meaningless then and I probably would have slapped you."**

Lisa grinned.

**"I'm glad I'm doing this now."**

Peering closer to Lisa's palm to admire the glittering piece of colored gem, Jennie caught sight of an inscription inside the band.

**"Something's written inside."**

Jennie gazed back at Lisa questioningly.

A mysterious grin lurked in her gaze as Lisa raised the ring and tilted it for her to get a better view of its inscription that read,

**"My Nini . . ."**

Jennie uttered in awe as the sentimentality and the possessiveness of the words once again bought tears to her golden eyes.

Amidst a haze of tears, Jennie saw Lisa put the ring on the same finger where her wedding band was. She felt the cool slide of metal on her skin before the Thai pulled her almost roughly against her chest then captured her trembling lips into a lingering kiss—she cried happy tears and smiled into the kiss.

When it ended, Jennie's grip on the Thai's shoulders loosened but she remained in the latter's arms and her long fingers lightly stroked the hair that fell over the Thai's forehead and at her temple. She sniffed softly and spoke with a bit of disappointment.

**"I'm afraid I don't have a gift for you."**

A chuckle rumbled from Lisa's chest as she admired the teary eyed yet smiling goddess in her embrace, the brunette's ebony curls spilling over her trim shoulders and back. Lisa brushed her knuckles over her smooth cheek that were slightly flushed and said,

**"You gave it to me months ago . . . I'm lucky to be looking at her right now."**

And with a deft move, Lisa shifted her arms to Jennie's back and the other going behind her knees then Jennie's world tilted as Lisa lifted her up bridal style and carried the giggling brunette to the her old bed.

Smiling, Jennie gave her a chaste smack to the lips.

**"It's been a long, exhausting day—"**

**"Days,"**

Lisa corrected, emphasizing the 'S' at the end of the word.

Jennie giggled.

**"Week—I'm glad it's over. It was a horrible week for me."**

**"For both of us."**

Gently, Lisa placed the brunette down and slid in next to the latter, pulling the covers over them then she drew Jennie close, their bodies molding easily, loving the feliene-eyed woman's softness against her rigid contours, absorbing her warmth, and inhaling her wonderful scent.

**"If in future you get annoyed at me for something, will you promise me one thing, Nini?"**

**"Anything."**

**"Slap me. Punch me,"**

Lisa said and Jennie was surprised to see the seriousness in the Thai's expression.

**"Throw something at me. I don't really care. I'll take anything . . . just don't think of leaving me again."**

Jennie looked at Lisa for a long moment, drowning in the latter's intense gaze, seeing relief, pride, joy and love in the dark hazel depths, before admitting

**, "Violence isn't really my thing, Lisa."**

She seemed to be pondering on the idea, considering other options and deciding on its wisdom.

**"How about we start anew by being honest to each other? No more secrets?"**

Lisa took hold of Jennie's soft hand and kissed it.

**"No more secrets."**

**"You know what's weird?"**

Jennie asked after a moment of complete silence. She adjusted her head on Lisa's arm so that they were face to face and gazing into each other's eyes.

Lisa smiled affectionately.

**"What?"**

**"Chaerin."**

Jennie replied, the frown that marred her brows showing of confoundedness.

**"You'd expect after what happened to us, she'd come charging in ready to claim my inheritance but nothing. It's just weird. You think she died or something?"**

Unable to hold back a chuckle, Lisa drew her wife in much closer that Jennie was sure not even a bedbug could crawl between their bodies.

**"I hate to be the bearer of bad news but she's very much alive. The reason why she did not bother you is because my father pestered her to no end when the labor dispute broke in the farm. The problems the laborers were complaining about was caused by her mismanagement before we even got the farm. And I fired the maid in our house that was spying on her behalf."**

**"You mean . . . she really hired someone to . . . ohh, that witch!"**

Jennie blurted out with a spurt of anger and disbelief, making her sit upright.

Lisa sat up too and ran a comforting hand up and down the brunette's back. The anger slowly dissipated after a while, making her ask,

**"How did you know it was one of the maids?"**

**"I hired a professional—**

**Nam Taehyun—to do a background check of every employee we have in the house. I promised you I'll handle Chaerin. I did not forget that promise. You don't have to worry about her anymore."**

Jennie's eyes became soft, grateful.

**"Thank you, Lisa."**

The Thai woman grinned while gently pushed Jennie to lie down on the bed and moved up and over her

**. "Just so you know, I can no longer ignore how sexy you look stretched on my bed or the touch of your hand and the feel of your body pressing against me. So babe, I feel it's only fair to warn you, I will kiss you now."**

**"Shh..."**

Jennie covered the Thai's lips that hovered very close to her own with her fingertips, her eyes twinkling. "I'm the one who talks too much, okay

*my pranpriya*

?"

Lisa stopped before she could swoop down on her wife's inviting lips, surprised by the nickname she used. "Pranpriya?—How did you—"

Jennie bit her lower lip guiltily.

**"I kinda lied earlier when I said I didn't mean to snoop here . . . coz' I did."**

**"Nini, it's okay. I'm just surprised,"**

Lisa assured, gently running her fingers through the brunette's soft dark locks spilled out on her pillow.

**"I haven't heard that name since graduating YGX High."**

**"Good because it's like a nerdy dream of mine to be married to a superstar and from what I discovered here in your room you were one heck of a YGX superstar. Just imagine my delight!"**

A hearty laugh erupted from Lisa lips as she yanked Jennie's hands up and pinned both wrists on either side of her head.

**"God, I love you . . . you wonderful, beautiful nerd of mine!"**

Then without wasting any more time, Lisa rained kisses all over Jennie's face and the pressure on the brunette's wrist disappeared.

As Lisa's mouth finally settled on her lips, Jennie's eyes closed, and soft, seeking kisses urged her lips to open. Gentle, eager hands ran along her sides and back brushing against the silky fabric, hiking it up her body.

Jennie's own hands did not stay idle for long. It sought the Thai

woman blindly, skimming underneath her shirt, exploring her rippling muscled back with widespread hands, sliding down over the hollows of Lisa's spine before she found the hem and helped the latter rid of the shirt the same time Lisa assisted her in shrugging the silk off her body.

Lisa cupped Jennie's breasts fully, pushing it upward, feeling its weight on her palms then she lowered her head to run her tongue on the soft, smooth skin surrounding the brunette's nipple, tasting, teasing. Jennie could feel the sweet yearning as Lisa continued the pleasurable task, soft sounds emitting from her throat, her hands cradling the Thai's head to her chest not wanting her to stop anytime soon.

Out of pure pleasure and longing, Jennie instinctively pressed her still covered womanly core hard against Lisa's warm, rigid body and moved it suggestively until the latter groaned and pushed herself up to yank the last piece of garment down Jennie's legs.

Jennie took that chance to push Lisa's back on the bed. The Thai woman admired her wife's vivid beauty and the seductive movement as the brunette crawled over her.

Anticipating Jennie's touch, Lisa laid back, her chest rising and falling and her blood heating up at an alarming rate. Lisa groaned when Jennie kissed her way down her well honed torso as the brunette undressed her fully until Lisa lay there silent, waiting, drifting in pleasure and very aroused.

Lisa tugged at her elbow, and Jennie fell back beside her husband. She clung to Lisa's strong neck, kissing her jaw, cheek, her lips, letting the Thai's expert tongue dance into the wet silk of her mouth. She matched her husband's hungry kisses, her eager caresses and the ardor of it all.

And from there, rapture began.

Lisa's lips made their downward journey, exploring Jennie's body at will, with reverence and love in every kiss. She tasted her, made her wife writhe and cry out, just like how she tasted her, took all of her length to make her shudder.

With desire coursing through her veins, it was amazing to Jennie how she was still aware of the difference in the way Lisa was kissing her. It was as if her husband was making every kiss perfect for her, making sure she would feel pleasure in every touch and at the same time, Lisa was atoning for the hurt she caused her. Lisa kissed her breasts, her flat belly, the soft contours and valleys beside her hip, her thighs down to her ankles until she was quivering with violent emotions that only the Thai woman can calm.

**"Please, Lisa . . . make love to me now,"**

Jennie murmured, arching her body in invitation.

Lisa's eyes dark and stormy with desire, she kissed her wife searingly then spoke against her lips, her words edged with love and passion

**. "My beautiful Nini . . ."**

Lisa lifted her body above Jennie's and poised herself at the brunette's waiting entrance.

And a moment later their bodies became one.

The minutes that followed each experienced a sense of celebration that equaled nothing they have felt before. It was more than a joining of bodies or a fulfillment of desire. Unburdened by their uncertainties and putting an end to whatever doubt either of them may have or any lingering memories of Niki the bedroom holds fading away into obscurity, they stroked each other to climax because of one reason alone.

Lisa loves her Nini. Jennie loves her Pranpriya.

Anything else is irrelevant.

⋆ ⋆

**"How was it?"**

Startled by the sudden voice, Lisa choked on the water she was



drinking.

She replaced the glass down on the kitchen counter, coughing and jabbing a fist to her chest to ease the sharp sting. With her face red, she looked up to find her grandfather standing across from her and looking like he was unconcerned his granddaughter was having trouble breathing or that he was the reason why she was struggling to breathe properly.

Patrick stood there, calm as a post and waiting for Lisa's coughing to subside.

A minute or so, Lisa grumbled at him.

**"Grandpa, don't sneak up on people! You're gonna give someone a heart attack!"**

All Lisa got was a slight twitch of the shoulders. Then he repeated his question.

**"How was it?"**

**"How was what?"**

**"Last night . . . with Jennie."**

Lisa blinked at her grandfather.

**"You're seriously asking me that?"**

**"I cannot be any more serious than I am now."**

**"Well, I can't tell you that!"**

**"Why not?!"**

He demanded, the set of his chin stubborn.

**"Because it's not something married couples should share to family members or to the public!"**

Lisa retorted as if scolding an ignorant child.

**"Do you ask dad this type of question? Coz' really, Grandpa, if he's comfortable detailing it to you, I don't share that sentiment."**

Patrick seemed surprised by her outburst. He frowned as though confused then once he understood what Lisa meant, narrowed his eyes at her.

**"You dirty minded snot!"**

He roared, swinging his cane over the counter separating them to poke Lisa on the shoulder.

**"I asked how was IT—IT being your talk with Jennie—not the IT you did with her after!"**

Rubbing the spot on her shoulder, Lisa had the grace to look apologetic. She offered a disconcerted grin to Patrick.

**"Uhh, it went well, Grandpa. We cleared the air,"**

Lisa mumbled

**. "Sorry for . . . assuming . . ."**

Patrick continued to grumble under his breath as he moved to sit on one of the fancy stools.

**"I wasn't expecting you up so early,"**

he commented after settling himself, slight annoyance still heard from his tone.

**"Yeah. I asked the cook to make breakfast for me and Nini."**

**"Is she awake?"**

Lisa shook her head, smiling at the memory of last night and the wonderful feeling she had waking up to the sleeping beauty snuggled close to her.

**"Not yet."**

**"Other than breakfast in bed, what do you two plan on doing today?"**

**"Grandpa, I feel like I'm in an inquest."**

**"Just answer the question,"**

Patrick uttered with impatience.

**"And stop thinking the nasty."**

Raising her arms in surrender, Lisa placated him with an answer.

**"I was thinking we'll go back to Gangnam coz' the paintings of Nini's mom are already in the mansion and I hired a designer to put them in the house as an added décor, you know, something to admire from the walls and . . . so Nini can see it. It's kind of a surprise for her,"**

Lisa explained, brushing off the matter casually but in truth she's really looking forward to seeing Jennie's reaction when the brunette sees her mother's paintings.

**"But we can always stay for a couple more days here, if she likes or if you want us here."**

Patrick stared at Lisa for a long time, sensing his granddaughter's giddiness, the contented smile and the complete change in her face which had none of the weariness from yesterday. She was smiling like the weight of the world had been lifted from her shoulders. She looks recharged and ready to take on anything.

He smirked and pulled a white envelope from his pocket.

**"Here."**

He slid it across the granite top towards Lisa

**. "It's a third option. I suggest you take it."**

Puzzled, Lisa opened the envelope and found destination tickets.

**"You're giving us a vacation?"**

**"No, a honeymoon destination,"**

her grandfather clarified.

**"Take your pick—Belize's Cayo Espanto or Le Taha'a in the French Polynesia. Those are private island resorts."**

Lisa was rendered speechless unsure what to make of the belated wedding present from her grandfather. Her mouth hung open, a pair of dark hazel eyes staring, assessing, until she gave her head a slight shake and cleared her throat.

**"Can we choose both?"**

Patrick shrugged indifferently.

Gratitude flashed across Lisa handsome features for reasons other than his thoughtful gift. At first glance, it may seem like Patrick Manoban doesn't care but Lisa knew the old guy along with her parents had a lot to do with where she is now. They were tough at times, demanded a lot, and a little nosy too, but they always come through for her and always wants what's best for her.

**"Thank you, Grandpa . . . really. Nini will love this too."**

With a whimsical smile breaking out from his weathered face, he accepted the thanks with a nod.

**"You're welcome,"**

he said simply.

**"But just one request, Lisa."**

**"Of course, Grandpa. What is it?"**

**"Make this honeymoon productive. I'm not getting any younger."**

**A/N:**

**2 chaps to go before this finally ends :(**

## [29] With You

**"Please stop grumbling!"**

Alicia heaved with exasperation lacing her voice as she swung around to give her father-in-law an irritated gaze. She kept her voice low and her lips in a smile all too careful not to let the gathered crowd know that she was actually chastising Patrick.

**"Dad,"**

She began in what she hoped was a reasonable tone yet would tell Patrick of her slowly wearing patience.

**"I don't know why it's such a big deal to you. We don't need proof of their efforts, you know. I'm sure those three weeks were spent—"**

**"Exactly!"**

Patrick hissed under his breath, also aware of the people around them.

**"Three whole weeks that I so generously gave!"**

He paused to acknowledge a congratulatory greeting from a burly man who suddenly clasped his hand for an animated handshake. Both him and Alicia smiling cheerfully at the enthusiastic remark for the successful opening of the new restaurant then as soon as the man left, he turned the same sour face to his daughter-in-law to continue where he left off.

**"Three weeks—and they bring home a dog!"**

Grabbing her father-in-law's hand, Alicia steered him in the direction of their assigned seats that provided optimal view of the long stage.

**"There's nothing wrong with that."**

**"Nothing wrong?—it's very wrong!"**

He was entirely flabbergasted.

**"Keep it down!"**

Alicia reminded him sternly, ignoring the annoyed and disbelieving look being thrown her way by her father-in-law.

His brows furrowing even more, Patrick looked about him to see if anyone had noticed his short outburst. When he noted none seem to have given attention since most were busy talking amongst themselves, mingling thru the crowd or busy admiring the opulence of the occasion, he clutched at his son's wife arm and retorted,

**"This is a conspiracy against me."**

He sounded as if he had discovered an actual conspiracy to bring him to his demise and thus warning everyone involved, he fully intended to thwart any more of it progressing.

Rolling her eyes, Alicia willed to stretch her patience then calmly said,

**"Dad, no one cooked up a conspiracy to annoy you. It's not like those two are controlling their urges just to make you suffer. Looking at Lisa alone will tell you. They are still enjoying their marriage. What you want—it will happen, Dad. Just be patient."**

Finding he couldn't come up with another argument to what she said, Patrick resorted back to grumbling unintelligibly until they reached the white seats near the stage. He slumped down on the cushioned seat with his name on it, adjusting his weight while continuously muttering under his breath.

Alicia placed herself on the empty seat between Patrick and Marco who had been waiting for them for a good twenty minutes already. She sighed heavily at Marco's unspoken question regarding his father's endless grumbling and the scowl that marred the old man's

face.

**"Dad is displeased with the new dog,"**

she replied.

Marco raised a brow.

**"The one Lisa and Jennie gave him?"**

**"Yes."**

**"Yes!"**

Patrick snapped quietly, once again renewed by the reason behind his restlessness, leaning to his left to address Marco.

**"That mutt with the brown curly fur—"**

**"It's not a mutt. It's a—"**

Patrick jerked a hand in the air between them to cut Marco off.

**"I don't care what it is!"**

He growled.

**"The point I'm trying to argue here is—when I told Lisa to make the vacation productive I meant human production! She should have used her efforts into planting her seeds properly—not buy a darn dog!"**

**"Well, I think it's sweet of them to give you a dog,"**

Alicia interjected, emphasizing the word sweet on her father-in-law.

**"Instead of taking up grumbling as your new favorite pastime, you should be thankful already and let others enjoy this night."**

**"Oh really?"**

Patrick remarked with a bit of acerbic edge to his tone, meeting his daughter-in-law's gaze with a challenging one.



**"What do you want me to do with this dog? It isn't for companionship . . . I'm sure . . . because the house is always teeming with humanity. I can just turn any corner, every direction and always a person is there. And I am more of a cat person—"**

**"No you're not,"**

Alicia contradicted point-blank.

This seemed to raise the old man's hackles. Shifting in his seat, he stated,

**"You're not me. You can't tell me what I am or am not!"**

**"I'm your son's wife so basically I'm also your daughter. You've been living with us for so long and If there's anyone who knows you, it's me. So will you please stop being difficult? They've been married barely a year. They were strangers before getting wed, not one itty bitty bit of knowledge about each other. It's all the reverse in their case. So, let them enjoy each other first before you start demanding for a great grandchild."**

Floored yet again, Patrick sat straight and crossed his arms over his well tailored suit and after a moment of sulking silence, he vented.

**"What the hell will I do with that dog?"**

**"Enjoy it. Name it. Play with it,"**

Marco enumerated with a grin.

**"You are enjoying my annoyance,"**

Patrick accused, his eyes narrowing sideways at his son, Marco.

**"Me? I'm on your side, Patrick."**

**"Horseshit."**

**"Now, now, no need for profanities."**

**"Dad, language!"**

Shifting to her left, Alicia gripped Marco's forearm and glared at him.

**"Stop goading him,"**

she hissed then very quickly pasted a smile to her face as another one of the guest stopped in front of them to offer congratulations.

**"Hello Emma! Thanks for coming! You look lovely,"**

she greeted a little exuberantly than normal, standing up to greet the socialite with a friendly kiss to the cheek.

Marco greeted the woman as well and so did Patrick but his face was still looking disgruntled that the socialite Emma couldn't help but ask Alicia in a hushed tone,

**"I think your father doesn't like having this fashion show in line with the opening of his new restaurant,"**

the elite woman conveyed, leaning closer to Alicia lest the old man hears her observation.

**"But I personally like it. I think it's a great end to tonight's occasion. Everyone is excited."**

Nodding her agreement, Alicia confided with a bright smile.

**"It was all Lisa's idea."**

**"How wonderful! I wish my son was more like Lisa . . . so responsible and charming. Sehun is somewhat of a playboy. Even now I see him flirting with another random female,"**

Emma complained, placing a hand to Alicia's arm while shaking her perfectly coiffed head.

**"These women he associates with will be the death of me."**

**"Oh, believe me, not too long ago I know the feeling,"**

Alicia offered with appropriate sympathy for the distressed mother, gently patting the hand that rested on her arm.

**"Yes, she does."**

Patrick suddenly interpolated, surprising the two as it implied that he was in fact hearing their conversation and wasn't reluctant to put his two cents in.

**"She managed to reform the one she married."**

Marco let out a strangled cough.

Emma's green orbs grew wide and she threw Alicia a furtive glance who smiled back uneasily before remarking,

**"He's senile—and that's putting it mildly. Let's go over at Lisa's side, Emma. I'm sure she'd be delighted to know what you think of her ideas."**

And without waiting for an assent, she forcibly dragged the woman away from her father.

But Lisa was not among the huddle of boys and girls which consisted of her cousins and friends all dressed smartly for the occasion and who seemed to be immersed in a deep conversation of sorts.

**"Where's Lisa?"**

Alicia asked making their entire grinning faces look up to her.

**"Backstage,"**

Seulgi quipped.

The rest of Lisa's relatives nodded.

**"Yep. Backstage."**

**"With Jennie,"**

Adam added which caused a round of smirks from the other guys in



*The Thai said so herself while they were enjoying a private Motu picnic in Le Taha'a as the sun was setting in the horizon.*

**"Grandpa sure knows how to pick a romantic and unique honeymoon destination,"**

*Lisa mentioned casually as they both looked to the sunset streaking orange and purple hues across the dimming sky.*

**"Yes. Everything here is breathtaking, charming and wonderful."**

*Peeling her dark hazel eyes from the sunset to gaze at the brunette, Lisa smiled at the amazement in her glorious brown eyes and reached a hand across the round table to lace their fingers together.*

**"Even more so because it's with you,"**

*Lisa huskily said, making Jennie's eyes sparkle in agreement as she nodded. "Sure it's a different experience being here but when I look at you and see you happy, looking at me with exhilaration in your eyes . . . all these becomes an exceptional moment."*

*Touched by the tenderness of the Thai's words, Jennie moved up from her seat to sit on her husband's lap. Gently cradling the Thai's handsome face in both her hands, she teasingly whispered, "Where did the arrogant woman I married in Italy go?"*

*Lisa's chest shook lightly as she chuckled, her hands snaking to her waist and adjusting her position on her lap so that the brunette straddled her instead of just sitting sideways.*

**"She fell in love with this ebony haired beauty. Lucky girl, if you ask me."**

*Jennie gasped at her sudden smugness but eagerly played along, squirming purposely on the Thai's lap. "Luckier woman, in my opinion."*

*Lisa groaned at the friction the brunette on her lap created in her groin. These days it doesn't take much to stimulate her sexually and Jennie knows it. Lisa tightened her hold on her wife's waist to steady her movements.*

**"You don't play fair."**

**"What do you mean?"**

*Jennie inquired with sham innocence still trying to fidget from Lisa's hold.*

**"Okay that's it."**

*Slipping a hand to the brunette's nape, the other pulling her lower body closer, Lisa dismissed the sounds of water, the gentle breeze of the wind and the distant echoes of other natural beings. "Making love while the sun sets will top the list of romantic activities, don't you think?"*

**"Out here?"**

**"Right here."**

*Lisa held Jennie's beautiful face and closed the gap between their faces to kiss the teasing smile on her lips. "Right now."*

**"I love you . . ."**

*Jennie murmured just before she wrapped her arms around the Thai's shoulders and kissed back ardently.*

They came back just yesterday afternoon, tanned and looking immensely refreshed. But with no time to spare, they picked up on their schedules. Lisa, getting in the loop of the preparations for the opening of the new restaurant which was finally decided to be called Marina, after her grandmother's, Patrick's late wife, name, went into a meeting only an hour after they arrived in the airport.

While Jennie went straight to the studio and after browsing through the numerous photos, signing papers, addressing some issues that arose in the weeks she was absent, she rushed to meet with Irene and some of her friends from high school and college to keep herself updated on the upcoming fashion show.

Also, Jennie was scuttled by a freaking out Irene to fit the suit that she's supposed to model. But much as the brunette wanted, there wasn't a chance to let Lisa see what she's wearing for the show. It

wasn't really necessary and Irene thinks she's being silly but Jennie wanted her husband's approval.

**"Are you sure this is okay with you?"**

Jennie asked her husband as soon as the Thai woman materialized next to her in the enormous crowded tent provided to those who will be modeling swimsuits, gauging Lisa's facial expression as her eyes languidly roved over the brunette's body clad in a gladiator open cut disc swimsuit in black and with gold trimmings. From the one strap bandeau connected on one side with a strip of textile to its bikini bottoms, the swimsuit actually is a one piece but the gaping cut in the area that's supposed to cover the middle part of her torso and back made it look like a two piece suit.

**"I mean if you think this is too revealing, I'll ask Sana for another one."**

Jennie pulled Lisa off to the side behind several racks of swimsuits and stacks of big boxes to keep away from staring eyes of the other occupants of the tent which they were already attracting. With her arms slightly stretched up to the sides, she slowly twirled herself around for Lisa's inspection and waited for the Thai woman to pass judgment.

Lisa smiled admiringly, amused by her wife's wariness, as she leaned off on one of the metal post holding the tent up to walk towards the brunette. Jennie looks splendid and unattainable yet her eyes held the same playfulness that has always been there. It's a wonderfully intriguing contrast to an ordinary onlooker and Lisa had no doubt the camera and the crowd will love Jennie once she walks out the stage.

Lisa wrapped her arms around her wife's tiny waist, toned abs that was revealed all too lavishly by the edgy designed suit, pulling Jennie close, her body instantly adjusting to the Thai's contours, then with appreciation written on her face, Lisa said,

**"So you like it?"**

**"It's classy sexy. I love it. It's perfect on you,"**

Lisa admitted sincerely, knowing no other female could pull off the suit with elegance the way she does.

**"You look absolutely fantastic, Nini."**

**"And you really don't mind that I'm going to walk out there in this?"**

**"We talked about this in Belize, babe. I even suggested to Irene to hold this show here. You know this."**

**"Yes, we did but I'm just making sure you didn't change your mind between our flight back to Seoul to the program earlier."**

Jennie was referring to the short program for the opening of the restaurant.

**"You were really not agreeable to this when Irene first told you."**

**"Ah, yes."**

Lisa concurred tipping her head back slightly.

**"That was then. When I was shrouded with insecurity and misplaced doubt."**

**"And now?"**

**"And now, after what we've been through—including the three weeks of honeymoon—I can honestly say I'm okay with this. I don't mind if they ogle at you . . . and they will. Believe me."**

The degree of certainty was evident in the Thai's voice but Jennie sensed it was plain certainty of facts and not anything else that would imply she was only forcing herself to like what she's about to do.

**"This is something that you have been doing with peers before I even came into your life, Nini. I don't see why I have to hinder this when there's nothing bad about it. It's for charity and I know every so often you also enjoy not being behind the**



**camera. Besides, we're married. You're my wife and I love you."**

**"I love you too."**

Lisa gently squeezed her waist.

**"Admiring stares will not change these facts. So yes, this is okay with me. And is there anything wrong if I want to flaunt my wife's gorgeousness once in awhile?"**

The Thai woman grinned widely while her brows rose as if daring Jennie to deny her.

The brunette laughed that easy sounding laugh Lisa found adorable and infectious at the same time.

**"I guess not."**

**"Grandpa is displeased though."**

Surprised by the abrupt change in topic and the teasing note to Lisa's voice becoming slightly serious, Jennie's smile was replaced with a questioning look.

**"I overheard Grandpa complaining to Mom,"**

Lisa clarified as she did her best not to smile at the slight crease marring her wife's brows while she listened carefully to what she had to say regarding the old man she had grown very fond of.

**"He's been pestering her to no end since we came back and throwing me death glares every chance he gets."**

**"He didn't like the dog? Oh no, I knew it."**

Jennie's eyes grew round and a flash of worry crossed over them.

**"We should have chosen a Labrador instead."**

**"It's not that at all,"**

Lisa assured her, gently running her palms up and down the brunette's arms.

**"He's just using the dog as an excuse to express his disappointment."**

**"About what?"**

**"About me not getting you pregnant."**

Jennie's perfectly shaped brows crunched together once more.

**"I'm still on the pill."**

**"He doesn't need to know that,"**

Lisa remarked with a chuckle while playfully touching a finger to the tip of her cute nose.

**"It's kinda funny actually seeing him all grouchy then immediately grinning wide when one of the guests approaches him."**

**"I should talk to him."**

**"Uh, no."**

Lisa shook her head amused by the concern that laced her voice over Patrick's unfulfilled wishes.

**"Unless you're telling Grandpa you want to be a mother soon—I prefer baby making matters stay between us."**

Jennie briefly bit her lower lip as she tried to read between Lisa's spoken words. In truth, even that time when Lisa had asked her to stay married to her beyond five years or even during their honeymoon, having a baby with her didn't really cross her mind. But now that the subject has been brought up by Patrick no less, she realized, as a married couple and with things between them ironed-out, it was a discussion they have to address.

**"Do you want us to have a baby soon?"**

Jennie asked tentatively, still trying to read Lisa's face.

**"Do you?"**

Lisa inquired back suddenly unsure of what she assumed to be her wife's stand on the matter, silently asking herself why they failed to discuss this during their vacation. Personally, Lisa was in no hurry to be a father that's why she never thought to open up the subject and considering the circumstances on how they came to be married, it was still too early to be contemplating about babies. But with Jennie's unexpected question, she couldn't help but think she had been sensing her wife wrong about having a baby.

Jennie smirked at her then unconsciously squeezed her husband's biceps through the dark sleeves of her tux.

**"I asked you first,"**

she mildly scolded.

**"Okay . . . No."**

Lisa replied, looking steadily at her curious brown eyes.

**"Not yet, at least. But just say the word and I'm amenable to what you want."**

Jennie afforded her with a beautiful smile followed by her musical giggle that said she agreed with her decision.

**"I want to have a baby, Lisa, but not right now,"**

she clarified.

**"I want to enjoy us first—you and me—"**

She lightly poked a finger to the Thai's chest and to hers as she said this.

**"—then we can start planning a family of our own."**

Lisa nodded, lightly pecking her wife's shiny lips.

**"That sounds exactly like what's on my mind,"**

she smiled, comforted by the knowledge that they are open about subject matters like this when only a month ago they kept thoughts to themselves, uneasy to confer deeper details of their future.

**"We're a young couple both in age and length of relationship. I want us to have a baby but not this early on. I don't think either of us is ready for that yet. And there are many more things I want to do with you—"**

Jennie giggled at this then reminded the Thai of their many adventures in the past weeks.

**"Lisa, we spent a day and night in a yacht in the French Polynesia sailing around the islands. We snorkeled, went scuba diving, jet skiing. We also went hiking and many other activities I'm sure not most couples can manage to do in such a short amount of time. We even donned those leafy costumes the natives wore and danced to weird, erotic music . . ."**

Lisa laughed then leaned her face close to whisper.

**"It was erotic all the way to our villa—it's still fresh in my mind, Nini."**

She was rewarded by the blush that tainted the brunette cheeks as she lightly slapped Lisa's chest and tried to temper her flushing skin.

Lisa would never tire of seeing her wife blush and knowing she's the one who can make her do so despite the intimacy they have shared thus far. She was both gently reared maiden and temptress and she wouldn't have it any other way.

**"I can't forget it too,"**

Jennie admitted softly after a moment. How could she forget anyway? It was their last night in Cayo Espanto and not to take away anything from the days prior they spent on vacation but that night was the most wildly erotic night of love making they spent during the entire honeymoon.

Yet aside from their frequent coupling, Jennie discovered herself in more ways than one during their vacation. She learned to take risks,

to simply let go and give her complete trust to someone. It was carefree, relaxing. It was solely about them. And it mystified her up until now, how they managed to cram so much activity into those three weeks.

But maybe when you're with someone you love, whether you're engaging in simple activities like strolling the beach or in a much more exciting one like exploring underwater life, everything is exhilarating.

And she knows, it was also the same experience for Lisa.

The three weeks wasn't just a simple honeymoon. It was an adventure . . . fun, exciting, risky at times, romantic all the way but most of all getting to spend those weeks in each other's company, without the worries of work or other people, they healed both their hearts and strengthened the shaky bond that they initially had.

Lisa's arm tightened more around her waist and the Thai trailed her lips to her ear.

**"I should have recorded that weird music they played . . ."**

She whispered huskily.

**"W-Why?"**

Jennie stammered as Lisa's lips began to nip her ear then slowly slid down to the skin just below her earlobe, making her shiver all of a sudden at the familiar jolt of electricity that came with the Thai's kisses.

She felt the Thai smirk against her neck.

**"Because . . ."**

Lisa uttered slowly, gently pushing the mass of ebony curls to expose her neck better to her lips.

**"It made you loose all your inhibitions about sex. You were brazen . . . sexy as hell . . . and wild beyond my imaginings. I loved every minute of it and I know you did too."**

Jennie couldn't deny it. She really had forgotten about reticence that night. She became as aggressive as Lisa was. But right now, although they were in a private corner in the huge tent, they're not exactly alone. And with Lisa showering her neck with kisses uncaring of the people who may see them, she fought against the haze of desire the latter was pulling her into.

**"Yes but . . . I want to do other normal—allowed in public—married couple stuff too."**

Lisa chuckled, easily lifting her wife's small frame by the waist and sitting her on top of a working table by the obscured corner of the space they were in.

**"I'm new to this married status, babe. You're gonna have to be more specific than that coz' right now with you pliant in my arms and wearing this incredibly hot swimsuit, I can only think of one thing to do."**

Then, Lisa proceeded to kissing her exposed shoulders.

The Thai woman didn't have to say it. Jennie could feel what Lisa had in mind and she wanted it too but before she succumbed to the desire her husband was slowly weaving her into which might force her to ditch rationality, she tried to divert her lavish attention by saying,

**"I'd love to . . . ride a Ferris wheel with you."**

**"I want to ride a hot air balloon with you,"**

Lisa said hot air like it was supposed to mean something other than what it literally is. Her voice low and raspy and to Jennie's ears, sounded so damn seductive.

**"But most of all . . ."**

Lisa paused to very slowly ease down the single strap holding her swim suit up.

**"I want to walk the streets of Gangnam while holding your hand."**

**"I'd like that, Lisa . . . stop,"**

Jennie fairly groaned, grasping the Thai's hand to stop it from disrobing her.

**"Not here . . . please behave . . . you're ruining my make up . . ."**

There was not an ounce of steadfastness in her voice.

Lisa let up on her shoulder to grin at her.

**"You don't need make up. You have a post honeymoon glow working for you. No make up can look as good as that."**

Then, swiftly, she held the back of the brunette's head and claimed her lips for a deep, sensual kiss, neither giving her time to decline nor catch a breath.

**"What are you two doing—oh hell no—stop being perverts! This isn't your honeymoon anymore!"**

Irene screeched from out of the blue making Lisa and Jennie jump apart in surprise.

**"There are no husbands allowed in here, Manoban!"**

Lisa's gaze landed on the affronted small woman that bore a disbelieving look and who was wearing a more colorful and psychedelic designed swimsuit than Jennie.

Lisa opened her mouth to defend her presence but Irene was quick to cut her off, wagging a polished finger at her.

**"Ah-ah, don't use 'this is my property' speech on me and I don't care that you let us use this place for free—no exceptions!"**

She gestured her finger toward the tent's exit.

**"Go!"**

Jennie giggled, averting Lisa's head to face her and giving the Thai

a brief kiss on the lips which made Lisa grin back.

**"Sorry Ms. Manoban, even if you own this place and you're looking so hot in this tux, I'm afraid there are no special treatments,"**

Jennie said exaggeratedly batting her lashes at her husband in a flirtatious manner.

Lisa laughed heartily, hugging the brunette tighter to her body and leaning her forehead to hers.

**"I'm crushed, Mrs. Manoban. But since I'm feeling very magnanimous tonight, I will let this pass . . . for now."**

**"Oh my god. Enough of this crazy flirting! Some of us just ate!"**

Irene heaved with exasperation and grabbed Lisa by the sleeve of her black suit, forcibly separating her from Jennie, to push her through the tent flaps.

**"I'm ready to throw up in my mouth."**

While she let herself be dragged by Irene, Lisa winked at Jennie as the brunette giggled and blew her a kiss.

**"We'll talk with Grandpa tomorrow,"**

Lisa called out before being pushed away.

**"This is bordering on ridiculous and sickening, you know. Express your overflowing love for each other on your own time! People want to go about their daily lives without having to witness an R rated fairytale unfolding."**

**"We just came back from our honeymoon, you know,"**

Lisa retorted, straightening her suit. She has gotten used to Irene blowing a gasket that her exaggerated out burst did not evoke any strong reaction from the Thai woman.

**"Right. That explains a lot."**



Irene rolled her eyes.

**"Admit it already! You don't like the idea of her parading out there that's why you all but raped her just now to let everyone know she's yours."**

**"I don't mind her parading out there,"**

Lisa coolly replied.

**"Yeah, sure."**

Irene snorted, not buying the casualness of Lisa's façade.

**"And the possessive streak just disappeared after three weeks on honeymoon. I remember all too well how much you were against Jennie modeling for this."**

**"I remember that too."**

**"And?"**

**"I'm not against it now."**

That made Irene's brow rise higher than normal.

**"Doesn't bother you?"**

Lisa grinned complacently, knowing why she was being persistent.

**"Nope."**

**"Damn!"**

Irene exclaimed after a moment of assessing her, her arms flying upwards.

**"Your calm exterior just sucked the fun out of me. I was so looking forward to seeing you stony faced and uncomfortable in the front row."**

**"Too bad,"**

Lisa expressed with an irreverent grin.

**"Hey, maybe Seulgi will get uncomfortable when you get out there."**

Irene narrowed her eyes at the tall woman, warning her to choose her words carefully.

**"Don't even go there, Manoban. There's nothing going on between us."**

Unfortunately for Irene, the warning is lost on Lisa. "Yeah and I'm not married to Nini." Then with a quick,

**"You look great, by the way. Seulgi will drool."**

Lisa swiftly turned her back on her and left in the direction of the gathered audience.

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**"What took you so long? The show's about to start!"**

Seulgi asked, noting the smirk that played on her best friend's lips, as soon as Lisa sat down on the seat next to her.

**"Don't tell me—that leer on your face—"**

**"You think dirty thoughts Kang,"**

Lisa replied, tapping Seulgi's back in a sympathetic manner.

"Can't say I blame you. The excitement of seeing Irene in a skimpy piece must be affecting your thinking."

Seulgi leaned back a little to stare blankly at the Thai woman.

**"What?"**

Lisa chuckled softly, her lively hazel eyes lurking with mischief.

**"Nothing. Just trying to wrap my mind on the idea of you two together."**

Lisa shook her head and straightened on her seat.

Eyering her Thai friend critically for a few moments, Seulgi insisted,

**"We are not together! Why are you smiling like that?!"**

**"Like what?"**

**"Like a fat kid that just ate a whole cake. That kind of smile."**

With quiet laughter, Lisa dismissed Seulgi's analogy and casually mentioned,

**"I invited Mino here. He called Nini while we were in Le Taha'a."**

Seulgi's head and hair snapped sideways in Lisa's direction.

**"Why would you do that? Irene will kill you!"**

She hissed.

**"Her and him are not on speaking terms. She's doing her best to forget him and you inviting him will only make it harder for her to do so."**

Slightly taken aback by the intensity in Seulgi's tone and the unexpected reaction, Lisa realized that she managed to somehow annoy her best friend by the mere mention of Mino's name and it looked like she's ready to pound her for overstepping her boundaries.

**"He declined."**

**"Good,"**

Seulgi rejoined, her body losing its tension.

**"Are you disliking on Mino in behalf of Irene?"**

**"I dislike him because of what he did to Irene. He's an ass. Him and Zefanya are the perfect match. No wonder they found each other."**

**"Ah."**

Lisa breathed, undecided on what to make of Seulgi's strong aversion to Mino. Her best friend was speaking as if she was the one spurned by Mino. Seulgi's protectiveness only goes to extremes when her family is involved or when someone she cares about is—a light bulb switched in Lisa's head.

**"You care for her. Something happened between you two while Nini and I were away!"**

**"She's my friend! I care for my friends,"**

Seulgi reasoned defensively.

**"Why are we having this conversation? This is girl talk!"**

**"Avoiding the topic—you definitely like her,"**

Lisa jeered enjoying Seulgi's unease.

**"There's nothing to tell! While Jennie was preoccupied with you in your honeymoon, I offered to help her get over Mino. It's the least I could do after she explained my side to Jisoo, the date I stood up the night Zefanya came back, and put me back in good graces with her. Jisoo is a great girl."**

**"How are you helping her exactly?"**

**"We hang out mostly. Clubbing . . . going out with friends."**

Seulgi shrugged as if to show what she did for Irene isn't a big deal.

**"I also set her up a few times on dates. It worked out well, surprisingly."**

**"With who?"**

**"The last was with Suho. They seem to be getting along."**

Lisa considered this for a moment, looked to the seated guests, then asked.

**"Is this great girl Jisoo here? Or is Suho?"**

**"No."**

**"And that proves my point."**

Lisa whistled quietly and grinned just as the Kylie Minogue's song Wow began playing in the background and the lights dimmed to signal the start of the show.

**"I know you have your eyes trained on one girl but enjoy the show, Seulgi."**

**"Shut up. That's you not me,"**

Seulgi countered, giving Lisa a light shove with her shoulders.

**"We know you have eyes for Jen alone."**

**"Of course!"**

**"You're a sap."**

Lisa crossed her arms over her chest and shrugged nonchalantly, looking straight at the now brightly lit stage as the first of the model came walking out the long platform that extended to the seated audience amidst the blare of music, clapping and dancing lights bouncing on and off the stage.

**"So? At least I'm not in denial."**

**"Just shut up, will you? I want to see the show without you twittering in my ear."**

Lisa merely laughed at Seulgi's annoyance before her eyes were glued to the stage, anticipating Jennie's turn. After six more models came out, she revealed her gorgeous self to the gathered audience. The clapping escalated. There were loud cheers from Lisa's cousins, followed by several pats on her shoulder and from somewhere in the crowd a number of appreciative hoots were heard.

But Lisa ignored it all.

Her intense dark hazel eyes were trained on the chocolate brown ones who also kept a steady hold of her gaze as she strutted like a professional model along the stage. Jennie smiled more brightly when Lisa showed her the Thai's charming smile. She felt very confident when she clapped and gave her a thumb up.

Jennie was elated to be on stage with Lisa watching her every step as though she's silently saying she's proud to show her off and with her unbreakable gaze, tell everyone present that sadly for them, she's very much taken.

And happy to be so.

## [30] Just Right - END

*3 years later...*

Looking around the ostentatious office, Jennie noticed the changes that were made since the last time she was here. The furniture was new and had a different arrangement. The walls looked brand new as well as the choice of art, from the paintings to the ornaments adorning every table in the room

.

Chaerin has a penchant for getting rid of old stuff in favor of the modern, trendier things so it didn't really come as a surprise to Jennie when she entered the office to see things have changed.

The unwelcoming vibe of the place was still there though and she feels it but forced herself to ignore the eeriness, crediting her unease to the woman who once again summoned for her presence without telling her why and who was sitting in her high backed chair looking at her strangely.

Jennie wouldn't call it malicious, menacing or even an aggressive stare. Far from it. In fact, she'll be bold enough to say, Chaerin is looking at her like she's trying to see past her exterior, trying to see something she had previously overlooked. She was seated in her usual rigid posture but her eyes were soft and slightly in awe that it almost didn't go well with her expressionless face.

Weary...and sad was what came to mind as Jennie met her stepmother gaze squarely. The woman doesn't care for her and Jennie doesn't want to stay here longer than was necessary but she had to admit she was a little bit curious why her stepmother wasn't her usual stoic, evil self.

**"Why did you want me here?"**

Jennie asked as she gracefully slid on the chair by her glass desk, monitoring her voice for signs of sarcasm. She didn't want to fight. At this stage in her life, especially today, she's much too happy to be fighting with anyone even her stepmother.

Instead of speaking, Chaerin relaxed her posture to pull out a large envelope from the drawer next to her and she slid it across the glass table. When Jennie made no move to touch the thick envelope, she said.

**"Open it."**

Reluctantly, Jennie complied with a bit of nervousness letting her fingers glide over the smooth dark yellow paper and pulling out the documents inside the envelope. Her eyes quickly scanned the writing on what appears to be the first page of a legal paper. For a brief second her fevered opinion of the woman making her think she was slapping her again with another legal clause from her father's will which she had violated or failed to abide by but as she reached the end of the page, she realized it was nothing like that.

Jennie looked up and couldn't prevent herself from gaping at Chaerin who still looked indifferent.

**"Does this mean what I think it means?"**

Jennie did not bother hiding her shock.

**"Yes,"**

Chaerin replied after a curt nod and an intake of breath then she leaned back on her chair before continuing.

**"Your inheritance . . . it's yours. I'm giving it to you now. No more strings attached."**

Her tone was flat but it couldn't hide the obvious protest of her feelings. To Jennie's ears, it was like a rehearsed speech, something her stepmother was only forced to say.

**"I've only been married for three years, Chaerin. The will says five,"**



Jennie reminded the woman in front of her. Sensing the inner battle probably going inside Chaerin's head, Jennie wasn't stupid to fall for the woman's trap. With their history, it was looking like this is one.

**"I get my inheritance in two years."**

**"That already has my signature, Jennie. The reason why I asked you here is for you to sign it too so we can be over this legality,"**

Chaerin explained with a tip-off of impatience straining her detached demeanor.

**"Then it's all yours."**

Jennie tried to smooth her features into polite confusion and eyed her stepmother openly. She doesn't have the desire to stress herself emotionally nor physically and she still feels the blissful bubble around her that's preventing her from flaring up at the woman who's a master at manipulating people.

At close range, Jennie could easily see the taunt face which obviously was a result of surgery defined by a pointy chin, hollow cheeks and thin arched brows. Chaerin's emotionless face was pale despite the carefully applied make up and her eyes were surprisingly gloomy as it gazed into hers.

**"Why?"**

Jennie insisted, not wanting to believe the sudden kindness and generosity had no motive behind it. She's convinced that Chaerin is scheming again.

**"Why the sudden—did something happen I don't know about?"**

Chaerin negated it with a shake of the head. Then sighed wearily as she closed her eyes for a split second, giving Jennie the impression it's more than just physical exhaustion she feels and that explaining her reasons would completely drain her.

**"You won, Jennie,"**

Chaerin stated.

**"There's no point for me to hold on to your inheritance for two years more when I know you and Lisa plan on staying married beyond that. I don't have an ulterior motive behind this, believe it or not. I know when to stop playing a game and this is the time."**

**"I wasn't aware we had been playing a game,"**

Jennie said with polite firmness, crossing her arms over her chest as she leaned away from the table.

**"And what makes you think I will flat out believe anything you say? Please give me more credit than my father. I know you better than he did."**

To Jennie's surprise, Chaerin chuckled softly and her grey eyes gained some smiling light in them as she kept her gaze on her

**. "He knows me too,"**

she revealed as if the fact was something of an irony.

**"He gave me all these with the condition that I can't transfer or donate any money or property to any relative, friend, acquaintance or even a random person. He gave me a huge chunk of his asset so that I can live alone."**

**"I don't understand."**

**"If you didn't pass out the day of the reading of the will or bothered to read the will on your spare time, you'd have known this,"**

Jennie's stepmother stressed.

**"I own everything he left me but only and only when I don't remarry or form any romantic relationship with another man, have a child either by birth or thru adoption. Otherwise, all these will be yours,"**

she uttered dryly.

**"You can ask your father's lawyers. Unless I stay this way, alone and unable to be with the person I lov—want, I am merely an overseer to his estates until it can be transferred to you. So what's the point in letting you wait for your inheritance?"**

Cloaked in astonishment and a small grain of mistrust at the information Chaerin had willingly spilled, Jennie was rendered speechless. Her mind was reeling. Instinctively she started assessing her feelings, digging deep inside herself to make some kind of rational sense of this. If her stepmother whom she had always thought as the kind of person who does things only when it is beneficial to her or will serve a greater purpose, currently looking haggard and dejected in front of her, could be believed, she realized with a pang of guilt that all these time the hatred she felt for her father was misplaced and unwarranted.

Her father did not betray her trust as she originally decided. Even while he was ill, Chaerin wasn't able to dupe him like she thought. In fact, it was the opposite. And instead of leaving her daughter at the mercy of his second wife, he cleverly reversed their situation by tying Chaerin to a life she doesn't want in exchange for the wealth that she was so eager to possess. And either way things goes, the Kim wealth will still be hers in the end . . . all of it.

*I love you, Daddy.*

Her mind whispered from out of the blue as she sat in silence overwhelmed by the strong feelings that suddenly assailed her.

*I'm sorry for doubting you.*

She never stopped loving her father. It was just the pain and the shock of her arranged marriage brought on by his death overshadowed that love. She was forced to deal with the hurt by pushing that love aside and Chaerin was a cunning person who took advantage of it.

**"Take it with you and go over it with your own lawyer, if you**

**wish."**

Chaerin broke the silence gesturing to the papers.

Realizing she was being dismissed, Jennie shook her head to clear it and slowly gathered the documents while casting fleeting glances at Chaerin who already busied herself reading and signing the papers that were given by her secretary earlier.

**"Stop looking at me!"**

Chaerin snapped, making Jennie draw back slightly at the sudden fire shooting from her eyes.

**"I hope you're happy now, knowing that whichever way I decide to go, in the end you'll still get everything your parents own."**

There was anger, regret and self loathing in Chaerin's tone. But instead of retorting back at the woman like she would on any other day, Jennie felt nothing but pity for her. Maybe she could attribute it to her current condition and the happiness she feels for what the coming days holds for her and Lisa and their marriage—something that her stepmother will never get to experience.

**"I am happy Chaerin,"**

Jennie avowed quietly, taking the older woman by surprise since she was expecting no less than a biting response from Jennie.

**"But it's not because of the money. It was never about the money,"**

she insisted unwaveringly looking straight into her stepmothers eyes to make her understand.

**"I only wanted something that had a connection to my parents and this was it."**

Jennie raised the envelope in hand.

**"It doesn't matter what I get. Even if they only left me a dog or**

**a book or a letter, I'll be contented because it's from them."**

She paused and smiled at her stepmother who felt slightly unnerved by the serene smile.

**"I'm sorry you can't be with the person you love. I'm sorry you had to live a life you don't want—for a time I experienced first hand what that felt like—but in your case, Chaerin, there's no one to blame other than yourself and you know it. You didn't love my father when you married him and he must've felt it somehow."**

**"What difference would it have made if I did love him?"**

Chaerin asked then she answered her own question in the next breath.

**"Absolutely nothing!"**

There was no shame, denial or apology in her words.

**"He loved your mother with every bit of himself. When she died, his heart and whatever love he had to give to others died with her."**

**"I know,"**

Jennie admitted remembering she also felt the change in her father after the tragic loss of her mother. It was painful knowing you can't depend on the one person you're counting on for comfort.

**"Just go,"**

Chaerin muttered with a hand gesture to the door then carelessly tossed her gold pen on top of the papers she was signing to massage her temple.

Envelope in hand and her bag slung over her shoulder, Jennie slid from her chair and stepped away from the table to head for the door. As she held the handle, a thought suddenly leapt to mind making her stop and turn back.

**"Chaerin?"**

The older woman looked up and narrowed her eyes at her. Irritation evident in them probably because she was still in her office. But before she could open her mouth to make a snarky retort, Jennie quickly spilled her question.

**"Why Lisa?"**

**"What?!"**

**"Why did you choose Lisa for me to marry?"**

The brunette clarified. It really doesn't matter now whatever Chaerin's reasons were for picking Lisa, but Jennie, out of curiosity, still wanted to know.

The stern line of her mouth relaxed and after a few seconds of silence, probably debating whether she should tell Jennie what she knew or not, Chaerin heaved a sigh and opted for the former.

**"I didn't. Your father did. In a separate letter addressed to me thru his lawyers to make sure I follow his wishes, he stated who he wanted for you. Ask your father in law and Patrick Manoban. Apparently, they were friends of his."**

Jennie gave her a long uncertain glance. This had become a day of surprising revelations all in her favor and she wondered if there's anything else she doesn't know regarding her own father. But Chaerin did not say any more. She averted her gaze from her to the papers on the desk, putting an end to their conversation and subtly telling her to leave.

Taking the hint, without a parting word, Jennie opened the door and exited. Leaning against the wooden doors as they closed behind her, she paused for a brief moment before walking toward the waiting elevators to gather her thoughts and emotions.

As she stepped out of the building to the ride waiting for her, she felt a wonderful kind peace and the pain in her heart that was caused by her father's shortcomings as a parent was finally lifted. It doesn't matter what else she doesn't know about her father because

whatever it was he planned, it was all to protect her. And for Jennie that's enough to fill the hollow part in her heart.

**"What happened in there?"**

Seulgi, her designated driver for the day, piped in interrupting her silent musings after noticing the faraway look on her face.

**"Nothing bad, I hope."**

Jennie shook her head as she clipped the seatbelt and smiled at the bear's worried face.

**"It wasn't. Don't worry."**

**"Jen, Lisa doesn't want you near your stepmother. She told me before she left for Thailand and you know this,"**

Seulgi reminded with something akin to fright, looking to the side mirror as she moved the car.

**"She'll kill me if she finds out I let you coerce me into driving you here and really, Jen, I don't want a repeat of that quarrel you two had last year. That was—"**

Seulgi paused to ponder on an appropriate word to use.

**"That was one major blah."**

**"Blah? That's not even a word, Seulgi."**

Jennie rolled her eyes but kept a grin on her lips.

**"So what? It was still blah! You know what, make that blah another. You know why?"**

Seulgi asked giving Jennie a brief stern look and when she shook her head innocently, she said,

**"Because I was in the middle of it! I had nothing to do with whatever it was that you disagreed on but I was stuck with having to hear you stating your case in my left ear then telling**

**me how my best friend can be an insensitive, arrogant, unreasonable prick sometimes—which is true, by the way—while Lisa was arguing her point in my right. Yet when you're both in the same room it's a silent war going on. You two drive me crazy!"**

Jennie couldn't contain her bubble of laughter any longer. Seulgi's exasperated tone combined with the reminder of that fight which is already hazy in her memory as to what caused it made the sound escape from her lips.

**"I'm sorry,"**

the brunette amended on a laugh which made Seulgi smirk.

**"I don't even remember anymore what we fought about."**

**"The pair of you have your moments . . . most of the time though you're sickeningly sweet with each other."**

"You and Rene have your moments too," Jennie teased knowing that Seulgi hated people insinuating there's more than just simple friendship going on between her and Irene.

Surprisingly, Seulgi merely snorted and shook her head.

**"Just don't tell Lisa about this."**

**"Seulgi!"**

Jennie breathed, laughing, realizing that the apprehension the bear-like woman was showing was more for her well being than for her encounter with Chaerin.

**"I wasn't planning on keeping this from Lisa. She'll find out sooner or later anyway. I'd rather she hear it from me than from someone else. Besides, even though the meeting with Chaerin was unexpected and strange, in a way it gave me good information and peace of mind. I'm glad I came."**

**"Okay, sure, tell her but do it when she's in a chipper mood like at her party tomorrow or—after you give her her birthday**





As of the now, no one knew save for her and one other person. She hasn't even told Irene, as much as she wants to. She wanted to cherish the knowledge on her own first then she wants Lisa to share with that knowledge before their family and friends get a wind of it.

Lisa raised a brow at the brunette, wondering why her wife was keeping her distance and seemed unsure how to approach her. Lisa wondered even more when Jennie gazed at the carpet for some minutes before reluctantly lifting her eyes again.

Jennie bit her lower lip to keep a giggle from escaping past her lips seeing Lisa's confusion. Normally, whenever Lisa is away for days, upon her return a very enthusiastic wife welcomes her. But not tonight. She wanted to tease the Thai woman a bit.

Make her wait. Make her wonder.

**"You're early coming back,"**

Jennie commented forcing a straight face.

Lisa frowned then, losing her relaxed pose on the bed to straighten her back and eye the brunette thoughtfully as if trying to visualize the inner workings of her wife's brain.

**"I missed you too,"**

Lisa said, standing.

**"And I think you should stop this and greet me properly."**

Jennie nodded, doing her best not to speak even as she was bursting with happiness and excitement. She wants to just blurt it out and see her husband's reaction but it was better if she waited for tomorrow.

After all, it is Lisa's birthday and she couldn't think of a better present than the one she's trying very hard to contain.

Jennie took muted steps towards the Thai woman, her gaze seem to be fixed with fascination on the carpet of their room which irked Lisa a little bit. She wasn't even that absorbed when they first

moved into the master's bedroom and she saw how enormous it really was and that the design worked well to compliment both their styles and was functional but cozy at the same time.

Lisa was about to ask if anything was wrong or if something happened while she was away but when the brunette's bare toes were touching the tips of her shoes, she looked into her hazel eyes then gave her a beautiful smile.

Lisa released the breath she didn't realize she had been holding. Sensing it, Jennie giggled softly and it brought a mischievous gleam to her eyes.

**"I missed you,"**

she whispered while her hand slowly lifted to gently caress Lisa's cheek then slid down to the Thai's neck, one finger lightly touching the pulse at the base of her throat. It was a seductive gesture and Lisa took it as it is.

Groaning, the Thai woman grabbed Jennie's wrist and pulled her lithe figure against her. Lisa bent down to touch her lips to Jennie's, lightly at first, then claiming with demanding insistence. Jennie slid her arms around the Thai's neck, clinging to her husband as her mouth meshed with hers hungrily. It was too many days away from each other, too much attraction, too much passion to contain.

They kissed like overzealous teenagers who had only begun to discover the wonders of intimacy and couldn't seem to get enough of it. Lisa skimmed her hands on the side of her wife's thigh, trailing up to her bare and perfectly rounded behind before setting a firm grip on her waist, lifting her up slightly as she kissed from her mouth to the smooth column of her neck, the line of her slick shoulder and back to her swollen lips.

It didn't take long for Lisa to carry Jennie to their bed, rid her of the towel and discard her own clothes with a little help from the brunette. Lisa's familiar hands, her warm mouth traveled over Jennie's body in ways that had the brunette gasping and begging for more. And she did the same to the Thai, showing the latter how much she means, how much Jennie really did miss her and how



Mino rasped, his face clearly showing that disbelief as he leaned his back on the couch and absently played with the bottle in his hand.

**"I—never in a million years did I expect Lee to be that openhanded. Did you?"**

Lisa chuckled, took a swig of her own drink and shook her head.

**"Nope. I had the same reaction last night when she told me."**

The hand resting on Jennie's waist tightened as Lisa slightly tipped her head to her wife and offered her a fluted glass of champagne that were being served around by waitresses in the venue where her birthday party is being held.

Jennie accepted the bubbly drink only to set the glass down back on the table.

**"Well, generosity had nothing to do with it,"**

Irene injected as she fidgeted on the couch craning her neck amongst the crowd searching for Seulgi. Her opinion of the woman unchanged despite what Jennie told them.

**"Chaerin's options are nonexistent but I bet you if she had another way, things could've been very different."**

**"Thanks to Mr. Kim for planning several steps ahead, otherwise . . ."**

Lisa trailed off and Jennie smiled at the underlying respect she heard in her husband's tone. When she told Lisa last night after they made love about what transpired in Chaerin's office, her sleepiness gave way to shock then confusion. Lisa was doubtful of Chaerin's actions but she had listened to Jennie as she cuddled up next to her expressing her thoughts about what she discovered regarding her father, enveloping her in a comforting embrace when she shed tears and later on assuring her how much her parents must've loved her just as Lisa does.

Then, Lisa made her laugh with comments about setting Marco and

Patrick on a lie detector machine to wring the truth from them regarding their friendship with the late Kim Ji Yong.

Irene suddenly raised an arm in a wave after spotting the person she had been scanning the crowd for

**. "Okay, friends and birthday girl, I gotta go."**

Then she fluttered off.

**"She's still avoiding me,"**

Mino stated with a twinge of regret, his eyes followed Irene's back.

Jennie reached out a hand to Mino, quickly forgetting their topic about Chaerin.

**"No, Mino."**

She insisted.

**"She doesn't hate you either. It's just awkward for her now after what happened. Give it some more time."**

**"I should probably stay in her apartment while I'm here to ease the awkwardness."**

Mino looked to Lisa and Jennie as if asking for opinion or assent.

**"Before . . . I always stay there when I'm in Gangnam. . ."**

**"No, man, Nini's right. Give it more time. Besides, Irene knows you're already staying in our house—and you can stay as long as you like even if you didn't get me a birthday present."**

Lisa patted Mino's shoulder in a friendly manner while Mino swatted her hand away and grunted a mock sarcastic retort, making Jennie secretly smile at how normal their interaction is.

It's like they've always been this brotherly. Jennie doesn't know when and how the tension between them got patched up. And until now she still can't forget her shock when Mino appeared in Jeju

early last year supposedly invited by Lisa to join the Manoban's family outing. But however these two important person in her life became friends, she's perfectly happy with how everything turned out to be.

"Also, my dear brother, I don't think it will sit well with Miyeon when she finds out you decided to stay with Irene,"

Jennie reminded, referring to Mino's girlfriend of eight months. Miyeon had been a long time friend of his and, from what Jennie knows, Miyeon was the one that made it easier for Mino to get over Niki.

**"You know Irene better than I do, Mino."**

Lisa continued to say on a slightly serious note.

**"A sudden change of lodging will make her suspicious and I doubt if she'll let you stay with her."**

Mino expelled a heavy breath and looked to the group of girls chatting animated with Irene, a fleeting sadness crossing his handsome features before he retorted in a resigned but joking voice,

**"Well, I know it's your birthday, Lisa, but I just hate it when you're right."**

[illegible]

**"Why did you choose this place for my party?"**

Lisa murmured as she kissed Jennie's temple while they danced to the slow music along with some of the guest. The party had been well underway. The small program hosted by Seulgi and Irene, participated by colleagues, Manoban corporation employees, friends and family for the sole purpose of either singing her praises, wishing her all kinds of wishes from the generic good health and happiness to the outrageous and even ridiculous ones, was done and most were minding their own business, chatting up other guests or some sampling the wine selection a little too much.

Either way, Lisa didn't mind. She was perfectly contented dancing

with her wife.

Lisa felt her giggle before she slightly drew away from her hold and gazed at her with naughtiness in her shining brown eyes.

**"Don't you remember?"**

Lisa hesitated, torn between recalling the significance of the place and the curiosity that had been growing in her thoughts as to why Jennie seemed to be glowing which she ascertained in part had little to do with her birthday celebration or the aqua colored dress she's wearing that had been complimented several times since their arrival.

**"Nini, I'm so sorry."**

Lisa doesn't want to hurt her wife's feelings since as Irene rambled on earlier Jennie had carefully planned this party for her.

**"But I need help remembering."**

Jennie rolled her eyes showing some disappointment but there was a smile on her lips.

**"This is where we were first introduced, Ms. Manoban,"**

she reminded with a light poke to Lisa's chest.

**"How could you forget our first meeting?"**

Lisa scanned the restaurant which Jennie had reserved solely for this occasion then as soon as her eyes widened, she knew she found that memory. Lisa laughed softly and pulled her close by the waist.

**"You were wearing a faded brown shirt that was probably two sizes too big for you, a pair of baggy pants that did a good job making you look like you were living in the streets and well worn flipflops! You wore those ugly brown flipflops,"**

Lisa related, the memory of that day coming to her clearly.

**"You deglamorized yourself on purpose."**



Jennie laughed as well, impulsively looping her arms at her husband's nape.

**"In my defense, the reason for the drastic action was because I wasn't ecstatic to meet my soon to be husband. So in a moment of desperation I thought I'd appear looking like a bedraggled female hoping you'd be so disgusted of me, you'll convince your parents to stop the ridiculous arrangement."**

Lisa nodded as if accepting her statement to be logical.

**"I'm glad I wasn't so disgusted of you then."**

**"Oh, you were disgusted!"**

Jennie said emphatically as they continued to wear smiles on their faces, uncaring and unmindful, like they often are, of the other people in the venue who were openly observing their little interaction with rapt smiles on their faces.

**"I remember you looked at me from head to toe with narrowed eyes and your brows drawn inward."**

**"Okay, I admit I was a bit bothered by how you dressed,"**

Lisa conceded.

**"You did a good job dressing to turn off a future husband."**

**"Irene helped. I don't know where she got those clothes and at that time I really didn't care because they looked perfect for my intention."**

Tipping her chin up to drop a brief kiss to her luscious lips, Lisa leaned her forehead to hers while still moving to the slow music.

**"I knew that best friend of yours is against me ever since,"**

the Thai joked then added in a voice that dropped down to a whisper. "

**But it didn't matter how you looked like when we first met**

**because during our wedding, you stunned me with your lovely self."**

**"Such a charmer!"**

**"I only speak the truth,"**

Lisa declared pompously.

Jennie laughed a bit louder throwing her head back and laughing some more, causing a few more of the guests who weren't used to seeing them the way they normal are—as Seulgi labeled, sickeningly sweet—to look at them.

**"Do you want to stay here longer or shall we go?"**

Lisa asked when their merriment subsided and she looked past her head to see a lot of the guests were either grinning at them or whispering about them.

**"I still have to give you my gift,"**

Jennie said, smiling as she followed Lisa's eyes.

Lisa's hazel pools darkened.

**"Babe, I'd like to have your gift when we get home."**

**"Lisa!"**

Jennie smacked her chest to get her mind to focus and not wander onto other avenues.

**"Not that kind of gift. You get that almost everyday, mister."**

Lisa grinned passing off an innocent look.

**"You don't have to give me a gift, babe. Your time and effort into organizing this wonderful party with all of our friends and family in attendance is already a gift to me. I'm happy with everything."**

**"Don't you want be to happier?"**

Jennie asked as she pulled her along towards the back of the restaurant where a private section was closed off. She had instructed the organizers that it will be occupied only by her and Lisa and no one else.

Looking at the rose colored couch, the glass table with scented candles, the round frilly pillows and the sliding wood door separating the room from the chaos and noise of the party, Lisa plopped down on the couch, thankful to be away from prying eyes and then she pulled Jennie to sit across her lap.

**"So about this gift . . ."**

Lisa began, planting light kisses along the brunette's neck and exposed shoulders.

Giggling, Jennie pressed a finger over her husband's lips to stop her from distracting her then she eased off of her lap to reach the cube shaped pastel blue box placed on the glass table.

**"Nini, you indulge me way too much,"**

Lisa said as she embraced her from behind.

Ignoring the Thai's mild protests, Jennie handed her the box with slightly trembling hands and an uneasy smile. She felt suddenly nervous which was stupid considering her excitement all day yesterday and today and the fact that what she's giving Lisa is more than a gift or a good news.

**"Open it,"**

Jennie urged Lisa when the Thai looked to her curiously.

**"Tell me what you think."**

Carefully, slowly, Lisa lifted the cover. She tried to guess from her wife's expression what could be inside the box to make her seem giddy and uncertain at the same time.

Jennie had her lower lip caught between her teeth and her eyes alternately looked from her husband's hands opening the box and to

her face to witness her initial reaction once her gift is revealed.

Lisa deduced whatever it was she was about to see in the lightweight box must be so important to Jennie for her to act the way she was now. And for some reason that made her feel some nervousness too. Lisa could feel her heart thumping a little bit faster.

Setting the cover on the couch next to her hip, Lisa peered inside with no expectations. She just knew that whatever it was Jennie gives her, she would cherish it no matter what because it's from her lovely wife.

But what was inside the box definitely surprised Lisa after a second of confusion and the smile that had been lingering on her lips disappeared as she took out the pair of white knitted booties and held them at eye level.

**"This is . . . a baby's . . ."**

Lisa spoke after several minutes of finding her voice and still she couldn't come up with a coherent thing to say. She gazed intently at Jennie's smiling face, her shining chocolate eyes, her glowing features and finally Lisa understood why she has a different aura about her, why she didn't take any wine that was being served, why she looks so blissful and so beautiful now more than ever.

**"Really?"**

Jennie had tears in her eyes as she watched Lisa realize what her gift meant. She blames her emotionality on pregnancy hormones but the sudden enlightenment that appeared on Lisa's face and the play of several positive emotions that were in her husband's eyes was more than enough to tell her she's as happy, as ecstatic as she was and maybe even more.

**"I'm two weeks along,"**

Jennie told her husband, laying a hand on her still flat belly.

They had wanted to have a baby since last year. As soon as they talked about their mutual desire to have a family of their own,

Jennie stopped taking birth control and both had had regular visits to the doctor to make sure they're physically able and healthy, especially Jennie, to have a baby. The desire wasn't one of urgency. It was more of readiness and the comforting feeling that making a family is something they can do on their own. Something they can do the right way. Something that wasn't pressured or forced on them by other people.

Lisa cradled the booties on her hands regarding it like a fragile object and her face split into a wide grin.

**"We're gonna have a baby,"**

she whispered as if to share a well kept secret then she gently pulled Jennie back on her lap and they clung to each other in a long, silent embrace, the booties crushed between them.

**"Happy birthday, Lisa."**

Jennie nuzzled her nose to her husband with her eyes closed, reveling in their shared joy.

**"It is,"**

Lisa gruffly uttered against her lips before tenderly kissing her.

**"It really is."**

Almost an hour later, they came back to the roomful of people in the party. Some hardly noticed their absence. Some did and among them were Lisa's parents, her cousin's, Seulgi, Irene and Mino.

They were all huddled together near the bar in a deep discussion of sorts when Lisa and Jennie joined them, ceasing all conversations as they focused attention on the hand holding pair.

**"And they show themselves!"**

Irene immediately exclaimed, suspiciously looking at their appearance.

**"Oh please don't tell me you did what I think you did."**

It was followed by Marco.

**"Where have you been?"**

**"More people arrived and they were looking for you, Lisa."**

**"I stand by what I said,"**

Seulgi avowed, gesturing to their joined hands and their happy smiles.

**"Sickeningly sweet."**

**"They have a master's degree in public display of affection."**

**"Yup."**

Lisa held up a hand to stop them while Jennie moved away from her to stand between Irene, Alicia and Mino, hugging the three of them and apologizing for their absence.

**"Is something wrong, Jennie?"**

Alicia inquired, baffled by her daughter in law's strange behavior.

**"Nothing's wrong, Mom."**

Jennie assured Lisa's mother, linking her arm in affection.

**"I just gave Lisa a gift and she's happy with it."**

Irene raised a brow, throwing Lisa an assessing look who was having the same conversation with the guys then back at Jennie.

**"It must've been a huge gift if it took you nearly an hour to finish the gift giving?"**

Jennie simply laughed, then also linked her other arm with Irene.

**"You're acting so weird, Jen. You both are. What's going on really?"**

Mino voiced aloud just as Adam mocked Lisa,

**"Dude, you're twenty seven. You're getting old!"**

Lisa smiled. She cast a meaningful glance to Alicia and Marco who were looking slightly confused then settled on Jennie keeping eye contact with her as she casually responded to Adam,

**"No . . . I get to be a dad now."**

Adam was ready to laugh but like the rest of them he was stunned into silence by the unexpected response. It was Alicia that broke through the wordless pause with her gasp as Lisa held out the booties for them to see and before Lisa knew it everyone was speaking all at once. Jennie was quickly passed around, hugged, kissed and congratulated by each of them while Lisa received several pats on the back and a tight hug from both her parents before they told her to call her grandfather who had left the party early.

Amidst the excitement that surrounded their family and friends and later on got picked up by most of the guests, Jennie ended the call with a delighted Patrick and found her way again next to Lisa. Her head settled just below the latter's chin where she could hear her husband's steady heartbeat and her arm wrapped protectively around her as they watched everyone in the room having a good time.

Jennie took a peek at Lisa through russet lashes as she felt her hand lazily rubbing her stomach over the soft material of her dress and smiled when she found she was looking at her too. There was glee, contentment, admiration, respect, trust and most of all love in their eyes that words were unnecessary to express them all.

They know.

They're a long way from being the perfect couple and they don't really want to be called perfect because there's no such thing. But they understand each other's imperfection well and that's what really matters.

And either by accident or by her father's design to keep her protected and well cared for, Jennie's life became more than what

she had always wished it would be.

**"Some luck those two have, huh?"**

Irene mentioned while she stood next to Seulgi by the bar observing their best friends. When Seulgi threw her a furrowed look, she explained

**. "I mean, who would've thought they'd work . . . make a forced marriage work and have a future together. I sure as hell didn't."**

**"Yeah."**

Seulgi nodded with a smirk but she was remembering something Patrick Manoban had told her and Lisa when they were wild, reckless high school freshmen. At that time, it sounded like a cheesy line out of a romantic movie.

**"Someone told me and Lisa once that people don't go about looking for love. They just happen like heaven sent gifts. And when it does, mutual work is needed to hone that feeling which, luckily for our friends despite the unexpected and rocky start of their relationship, it's what they unknowingly did."**

Irene smiled and turned her head sideways to stare at Seulgi who was still looking at Lisa and Jennie like a proud friend, like she had a hand in making the relationship work.

**"Sometimes, you amaze me, Kang."**

Irene sincerely complimented earning her an ironic twitching of the lips from Seulgi who assumed it was her usual sarcastic complimenting of the bear-like woman.

Seulgi chuckled, not bothered in the least.

**"Let's disturb them, Bae."**

Seulgi tipped her head toward Lisa and Jennie.



**"They have plenty of time to cuddle in the future."**

**"Right behind you, Kang. Right behind you."**

Irene smiled as she follows the grinning Seulgi towards the happy couple.

**THE END.**